

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SESSIONS IN KOREAN IMMIGRANT
CHURCHES IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

A Professional Project
Presented to the Faculty of
The School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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May 1983

Mr. Kyung Suh Kim,
has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank my project advisers, Robert Arnott for his guidance and support and Chan-hie Kim for his kind guidance and assistance without which this project would have not been completed.

I also would like to thank the session members and congregation of Korean Hope Christian Church for allowing me to take pulpit leave for several months, Margie M. Denton for editing the rough draft, and Stephanie Rhoades for the final typing of this manuscript.

A deep appreciation is expressed to my family, my wife, Chung Sook and my boy, Yung Min.

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ABSTRACT

This project is designed to trace the Biblical origins and historical development of the concept of elders in Presbyterian polity, to investigate and analyze the structure and function of the session system in Korean churches, to show how the session system used in Korea followed when the congregations immigrated to the United States, and to compare the operation of the immigrant churches with that of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

The most significant fact that emerged from this study was that if a Korean immigrant church adopted a modified and improved system of sessions, the peace and growth of the church would be greatly improved. Two major problems that must be solved are results of the authority-oriented session used in most Korean Presbyterian churches. First is the problem of age and term of elders. Church members must be led to accept younger elders as responsible session members, and elders must learn to accept retirement from the session without feeling a loss of prestige or status. Second is the problem of size of session. Ways must be found to permit a small congregation to elect enough elders for the democratic management of church affairs, including all necessary committees.

As the session adopts the best features of its structure and management in Korea and in the United States, the functioning of the church and the happiness of its people will combine to the advantage of the Korean immigrant society.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. THE PROBLEM

This project deals with the effectiveness of sessions and their members in terms of their structure and operation. A careful study will show how to reconstruct and improve them in the Korean immigrant churches in Southern California. The comparison of the session system in both the United Presbyterian Church and the Korean Presbyterian Church will expose the advantages and disadvantages of each to all the Korean Presbyterian immigrant churches.

B. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Even though we do not have an official demographic data of the Korean immigrant population in Southern California, it is roughly estimated that around 200,00 Korean immigrants are settled down in Southern California. There are over 400 Korean Christian churches said to be in this area. Many of these Korean churches are not officially affiliated with any major denomination. Some of them are affiliated with the Korean denominations in Korea; but most of them are Korean immigrant independent churches. Whether or not they are affiliated with some denominations, most of them are Presbyterian-oriented in terms of sessions in the form of government. There can be found several reasons for this. One of these reasons is the fact that most of the Protestant population had belonged to the Presbyterian

churches in Korea. It is generally understood that most of the local congregations of the Korean immigrant independent churches adopt the Presbyterian form of government in order to attract into membership new arrivals among Korean immigrants. When independent churches work within the Presbyterian form of government, sometimes they unintentionally show signs of congregationalism because Presbyterianism presupposes higher or lower courts in the strict sense of meaning which is often called "connectionalism." Currently, the most difficult problems and troubles these Korean immigrant churches face with their own sessions begin with the structure and operation of the sessions.

The sessions of the Korean immigrant churches are typically so authoritative in their management and operation that they may not be acceptable to the members in this democratic community. Sessions are very authoritative in Presbyterian churches back in Korea. In particular, the members of a session are authoritative and powerful in churches. They are structured and organized to be powerful. For example, the term of an elder is unlimited and permanent in most Presbyterian churches in Korea. Once elected in a particular Presbyterian church, an elder is to serve his church for his life-time. However, this kind of session system sometimes causes trouble in the Korean immigrant churches in more democratically trained communities. The Korean immigrant churches are said to be trying to operate church management authoritatively in this democratic

society.

Sometimes the members of a session are so powerful that the characters and personalities of them become obstacles to the mission and growth of the church. When we hear about a church problem, it is always about the session and its member in a particular church. Therefore, it is very important for the peace and growth of a particular church to improve the effectiveness of the structure and operation of its session.

This project is 1) to trace the Biblical and historical origin and development of elders and Presbyterian polity, 2) to investigate and analyze the session-systems of the Korean immigrant churches with regard to their structure and operation, 3) to compare the session-systems of the Korean immigrant churches and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 4) to propose some plans for improving and reorganizing current sessions' structure and operation for Korean immigrant churches in Southern California.

Improved organization, structure, and operation would be of great value to many Korean immigrant Presbyterian and independent churches in the United States.

C. DEFINITIONS OF MAJOR TERMS

1. Board of Deacons: There is no board of deacons in the Korean Presbyterian church. The board of officers is regarded as board of deacon. Both terms are used interchangeably in this paper. Since the majority of the boards of officers consist of deacons, the

board of officers is often called the board of deacons, (Jae Jik Joi in Korean).

2. Board of Officers: It includes all the officers, permanent or temporary, in a Presbyterian church. Pastor, associate minister, preachers, elders, kwonsas, deacons, and temporary deacons are all members of it. This board takes care of all matters, financial and others, except the spiritual ones which are taken care of by the session.

3. Connectionalism: It indicated the organic nature of a system of various courts in the form of government in the Presbyterian Church.

4. Deacon: There are two kinds of deacons in Korean Presbyterian churches. One is "ordained deacons", which is An Soo Jip Sa in Korean, the other, "temporary deacons", which is called Seo Ri Jip Sa. The duties and responsibilities of both kinds are the same, but the terms are different. Ordained deacons are permanently installed in a particular church, but temporary deaconship has to be renewed annually by the session or by an election.

5. Elder: This is a permanent position in the Presbyterian church. There are two kinds of elders. One is teaching elders; the other, ruling elders. Technically, a teaching elder is called "pastor" or "minister"; a ruling elder is called "elder" in the Presbyterian Church. Some denominations have temporary elders or unordained elders

in their church government. Here, an elder applies to any kind of elder which can be called Jang No (elder in Korean), whether permanent or not, ordained or not.

6. Kwonsa: This, too, is a permanent position in the Korean Presbyterian Church. It is equivalent to an elder, and was created for women, since most Korean Presbyterian churches do not allow women to be elders. It is not a member of the session.

7. Presbyterian Church: A church with a session and session members who are called elders (Jang No in Korean), claiming that it is Presbyterian, whether affiliated with any denomination or not.

8. Preacher: He or she is an assistant to the pastor. Sometimes he may be a youth director of a person in charge of the visitation program.

9. Session: A supreme government body in Presbyterian Church, which consists of pastor and ruling elders in a particular church. This is called Dang Hoi in Korean.

10. Tong Hap Presbyterian Church: There are many Presbyterian Churches in Korea, one of which is called Tong Hap Presbyterian. This is the largest one among them, and has an official relationship with the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, supporting "Ecumenism".

D. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

This project is limited mainly to Korean Hope Presbyterian Church but with some other Presbyterian structured churches in Southern California giving me general information about the operation of their churches. Although this project is limited to a few churches, the study can be applied to many Korean immigrant churches in this area.

CHAPTER II

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING ELDERSHIP

A. THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE TERM ELDER

The English word "presbyter" is derived, through the Latin, from the Greek word πρεσβύτερος, literally meaning "older", (the cognate word, πρεσβύτερος, "old man"), but often with no comparative force, "elder." The English word, priest, also has come from the same Greek term, but presbyter is not synonymous with priest. The importance of the "old man" or "elder" was a natural development of the authority of the head of a family, and of honor felt for parents and for the aged in primitive times as described by Singer:

In primitive times age was a necessary condition of authority. Not only among the ancient Jews, but also among other nations of antiquity, the elder of the nation or of the clan constituted the official class.¹

As parents wield authority in a family, so the elders wield authority in the life of the clan, tribe, or local community. "This fact of age is undoubtedly the true origin of the authority of elders."² We can trace the position assigned to Abraham, Issac, and Jacob in the Bible. The reverence due to parents and to the aged is a favorite theme of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. As told in the

¹Julius H. Greenstone, "Elder" in The Jewish Encyclopedia, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1903), 5:92.

²M.H. Shepherd, Jr., "Elder" in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 2:72.

book of Job, we can find out that Eliphaz the Temanite is confident, "Both gray-haired and aged are among, older in days than thy father" (Job 5:10). Accordingly, in old times severe penalties are prescribed for those who fail in respect and duty towards parents and the gray-headed.

However, in antiquity there must have been many old men who were not necessarily elder, even though they were old enough. An elder has a technical meaning, while its ordinary meaning persists, and later on "elder" came to mean simply a chief, which usually means "mature". This kind of phenomena can be found in the Presbyterian Church in which elders are not always old.

In primitive society the head of a family or clan, like the captain on a ship, would perform many functions which are assigned to separate individuals in a more civilized society.

He would be a leader in war as well as peace, priest, judge, chief authority of tribal tradition, and possibly doctor. It was, therefore, natural that the title, "elder", was borne by various people in authority and by the different professions as society developed.³

In the Old Testament we read not only of elders of cities, tribes, etc., but also of the elders of Pharaoh's household (Gen. 50:7), of the elders of David's household.

The title, elder, for a person of authority, learning or other

³W.H. Bennett, "Elder" in Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1926), 5:254.

distinction continues to this day. The Greek γερουσία and the Roman "senatus" are still represented by the senates of modern States and universities. The title and the office were taken over by Christianity and are still found in priests, presbyters, and elders.

B. ELDERS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. In the Time of the Exodus

Even though the elders are presupposed in the Old Testament tradition, nowhere do we read of the origin of their appointment or of the origin of the establishment of colleges. It is generally assumed that their origin lies in the ancient patriarchal period. We do not have any mention of elders until the time of the Exodus:

The institution of elders existed among the Egyptians (Gen. 50:7), among the Midianites (Num. 22:7), and later among the Greeks (γέροντες or πρεσβύτεροι) and Romans ("patres" or "senatus"). Although the Talmud points to the existence of such an institution in the time of Abraham, no distinctive mention is made of it in the Bible until the period of the Exodus.⁴

"According to Exodus, Moses assembles the leaders of Israel to declare to them, and thereby to the people in Egypt, the approaching emancipation (Ex. 3:16; 18). They are the heads of the families, households, and tribes."⁵ It is the duty of the elders to supervise the slaying of the family offering to celebrate the Passover (Ex. 12:21).

⁴Greenstone, 5:92.

⁵Ibid.

Seventy elders see the glory of God in the story of the making of the covenant with Moses (Ex. 24:1; 9). As the representatives of the whole people the elders go with Moses when he punishes Datan and Abiram (Num. 16:25). The elders also stay by Joshua when the theft of Achan is expiated (Jos. 7:6). The elders lead the people with Joshua in the attack on Ai (Jos. 8:10). Joshua summons them when he calls all the people together to a national assembly at Shechem (Jos. 24:1). Moses appointed seventy elders at the command of God, shared his burdens with them, and God endowed them with a portion of the Spirit which rested on him (Num. 11:16). It is clear that the elders exercised a continuing role in Israel's life. "The number of them depended, no doubt, on the size of the local community, the larger units were led by councils of elders which administered justice, represented their association in negotiations and made other decisions."⁶ There were seventy seven elders at Succoth (Jud. 8:14). Most of them may be said to have been leaders in war, too.

2. In the Time of the Kingdoms

If we do not know the origin and the institution of the elders prior to the conquest of Canaan, the picture changes after the occupation. Now, for the first time, we see the elders who are leading members of the municipal nobility in various districts, whether or not the towns are Israelite. In the time of the kingdoms, in the hands of

⁶G. Bornkamm, " πρέσβυς " in Theological Dictionary of The New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 6: 655.

these elders lie decisions in political, military, and judicial matters, and, in addition to local elders, there seem to have been elders from districts and from many or all of the tribes who met for common decisions (Jud. 11:5, 1Sam. 30;26 etc.). In such urgent times as war and national crises, the decisions of elders were extremely important for the country or for kings. As Bornkamm observes:

The history of the monarchy shows what power lay in their hands especially in the time of war and how advisable it was for the ruling king, or their opponents, to win them over.⁷

For example, the elders of Israel resolve to bring up the ark in the war against the Philistines. They demand that Samuel should appoint a king (1Sam. 8:4). Saul, when disgraced, asks to be reinstated before the elders of Israel (1Sam. 15:30). In the time of Absalom's rebellion the elders of Israel defect from David (2Sam. 17:4), and David can get back the kingdom only when he has won the allegiance of the elders. David makes a treaty with the elders by which he attains to royal power (2Sam. 5:3). However, when a royal bureaucracy was established, the influence of the elders declined sharply. They still had power, and the monarchy had to be able to count on this in critical situations (1King 20:7f) or in the carrying out of important decisions (1King 21:8, 11). Even a great prophet such as Elisha sought and found support among the elders when the king stood against him (2King 6:32 and 10:1,5).

⁷Ibid., 6:657.

3. The Post-Exile Period

Despite the fading away of the tribal organization towards the end of the pre-exilic period and its total collapse after the deportation, representation by elders continues both among those who remained at home and among the exiles. At home a distinction must be made between the country and the capital of the home-land. We can discover that the elders of the land oppose the judgment of the capital and plead for the prophet (Jer. 26:17). In Ezk. 8:11f., we read of elders of Jerusalem representing the whole people; and the prophet, in a vision, sees, from Babylon, the idolatrous practices of the seventy elders in Jerusalem. There are also elders at the head of the community of the exiles (Jer. 29:1). The elders are to have enhanced significance as those who exercise limited self-government on behalf of the people, when all other political forms have been shattered in exile. After the Jews are taken as captives to Babylon, it comes to pass that their political and social structure undergoes great modification. In the exilic community, a new class of fame and honour comes out as a leading group:

Within dissolution of the tribal unions individual families grow in importance and these are foundations of new community. Prominent families become more important, their heads come out as leader of the people after the reestablishment of the community. The elders and the families from which they come become an aristocracy.⁸

⁸Ibid., 6:662.

In the exilic period, the elders founded their dignity and authority on the special position of their families within the people itself, based upon the position which they occupied in the clans and tribes.

C. ELDERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Jerusalem Church

The first Christian congregation was gathered in the very place where opposition to our Lord had been strongest and where he was put to death as a criminal. Therafter, the Jerusalem church became the mother of all subsequent Christian communities. The center of the old faith also became the center of the new. From there it would spread to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Though Christianity was to be a universal religion, its initial focus was in the city where Jesus had not only died but risen again and where the Holy Spirit was initially poured out. When the gospel began to win its way through the Mediterranean world and beyond, those who lived far from Jerusalem regarded themselves as branches of one body, which had its starting point in the holy city.

Therefore, in Christianity, elders first appear at the mother church in Jerusalem as the local authorities of the church.⁹ In Acts 15:23 the decree of the council is issued in the name of "Apostles and elders" jointly. In Acts 21:18 we have no longer "apostles and elders", but "James and all the elders". As already

⁹Burton Scott Eastern, "James" in The Interpreter's Bible, 12:16.

mentioned in the section Elders in the Old Testament, well before New Testament times, this term had become simply the title of a Jewish official entrusted with authority to govern. The development is clear if we remember that the identity of the name "elder" in Judaism and Jewish Christianity necessarily implies identity of office:

In the New Testament period every Jewish community was governed by a board of elders called "sanhedrin" (literally, "session"), composed of seven in villages, twenty three in cities, and seventy in Jerusalem.¹⁰

"The persecution which the believers at Jerusalem had begun to suffer at the hands of their countrymen had doubtless tended to emphasize their separate existence as a community, and in a community composed of Jews it would be very natural that the leading members should be spoken of as elders."¹¹

As the apostles died or sought other mission fields, their local authority was taken over by elders. It might be at this stage that the "elders of the Church" mentioned in Jas. 5:14 would appear in contrast to elders of the place that designated the non-Christian Jewish officers, for the authority of the Christians was naturally limited to their own community. In Acts 15 and 16:4, the apostles and the elders clearly function as a supreme court and normative teaching office for the whole church. In the decree they come to a

¹⁰Ibid., 12:15.

¹¹T.K. Cheyne, Encyclopedia Biblica. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1902), 2:3833.

binding decision about the minimal demands of the Lord so far as the Gentiles are concerned. In this instance, the apostles and elders are patterned after the Jewish Sanhedrin and not just the synagogue council.

2. Hellenistic Church

The Hellenistic churches of the Pauline mission field contrasts greatly with the first community after the Jewish pattern. There is no reference to presbyters in the uncontested Pauline epistles, though there was no absence of organization and offices in the Pauline congregations. Paul very rarely confers any title on the office-bearers in a local church. For the most part he refers to them in terms of their function in the congregations (Rom. 12:7f; 1Cor. 12:28; 1Thess. 5:12). As far as Paul is concerned, their authority derives from the ministry accepted and discharged by them, not from their status. They do not have any authority either on the ground of age or on that of length of membership in the community. "The constitutional principle in the congregation is that of plurality of charisma, not that of a naturally developed tradition which qualifies its bearers and sponsor to lead the Church."¹²

¹²Bornkamm, 6:664.

3. The Influence of the Synagogue of the Diaspora

We have to wait for the writings of the post-apostolic fathers in order to get reliable information on the development of a presbyterial constitution after the pattern of the synagogue of the diaspora. These writings are, in some respects, strongly influenced by Hellenistic Judaism. The nearest approaches in the New Testament are as follows:

a. James. We have the Epistle of James, which mentions presbyters only in 5:14. If we go to the sphere of Hellenistic Jewish Christianity, the sick man is bidden to call the elders of the church that they may pray over him and anoint him for his recovery:

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord (Jas. 5:14).

Obviously, these are office-bearers of the congregation and not just charismatically endowed older men, and they are also clearly regarded as endowed with the gift of efficacious prayer by virtue of their office.

b. 1 Peter. The picture in 1 Peter is essentially the same. Though perhaps writing from Rome, Peter, too, is addressing the churches in Paul's mission field in Asia Minor. Here πρεσβύτεροι occurs in the context of an admonition to the elders first (5:1-4), then to the younger member of the church(v.5), and finally to all the members

(5b-9). The antithesis between "elder" and "younger" might suggest that the elders are a natural group such as we find elsewhere in the epistles. The elders here are a college entrusted with the guidance of the church, i.e. they are office-bearers. The specific admonitions in v. 2f give us a glimpse of certain details. Institution and obligation are obviously presupposed as they are directed to discharge the office - not by constraint, but willingly:

The presbyter appears as treasurer, member of the Church parliament, ambassador, shepherd; as teacher, as exercising some kind of authority in faith and discipline, as deriving his power from the Holy Ghost, as ordained by the apostles; and we gather also that there were as a rule many presbyters in each Church.¹³

The fact that it might be a temptation to personal gain shows that the presbyters were in charge of the community funds. It is very sure that they had disciplinary powers, since there is the warning against love of power(v. 3). The elders are summoned to be examples to the flock by avoiding all the abuse of their office. Precautions are taken against any attempt to make the authority of the elders autonomous, that is, on the basis of the weight of the implied natural and historical factors. The pastoral office is plainly subject to the authority of the Chief Shepherd, Christ, for whom the title "Bishop"(ἐπίσκοπος) is reserved. The temptations implicit in the presbyterial office here show that the office

¹³Charles Bigg, St. Peter and St. Jude. (International Critical Commentary; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 183.

was more developed and fixed in the related verse in Acts 20. The dignity of the office may be seen from Peter's self-designation as the elder (ὁ πρεσβύτερος) (5:1). It is true that the apostle is here emphatically but modestly setting himself alongside the presbyters. It is worth noting that in 1 Peter 5 the presbyterial office is not called the guardian of the apostolic tradition against error.

c. Other Catholic Epistles. The fusing of what were, at first, different traditions regarding offices was rather more than a product of the theological and literary work of the author. It obviously took place in various ways in the constitutional history of primitive Christianity. This may be seen especially in the Pastorals (1 Tim.3:7; 5:17). In the four passages in which the term elder occurs, the usage is not quite consistent. The term is clearly a designation of age in 1 Tim. 3:7 and 5:17. The same term is plainly a term for the bearers of an office of leadership in the Churches. The college of elders (πρεσβύτεροι) took part in the ordination of Timothy by the laying on of hands (1 Tim.4:14). Titus was to appoint elders(πρεσβύτεροι) in the local congregations for the sake of order (Tit. 1:5). Timothy is mildly advised not to ordain hastily. The presbyters enjoy special disciplinary protection (1 Tim.5:9), and those who discharge their office are to receive double honour. Even though this "double honor" can refer to either a material reward or a special reward, 1 Tim. 5:18 lends unconditional support to the former view.

A surprising claim in the Pastoral is that the bishop plays an important part like the presbyters and that his functions are the same. It is thus natural to suppose that the offices are one and the same in the Pastorals. It is worth noting that in the Pastorals ἐπίσκοπος is always in the singular while the πρεσβύτεροι form a college.

d. Revelation. Twenty four elders surround the throne of God in heaven along with the four beasts (4:4, 10; 5:6,8,11,14 etc.). Their thrones, white robes, and crowns show that they are heavenly beings, and the title πρεσβύτεροι suggests that they are God's council of elders. Yet there is not mention of God sitting in council with them, nor do they seem to discharge a judicial office(20:4). Their function is not the exercising of their own domination, but simply adoration of the majesty of Him who sits on the throne(4:10; 19:4), and of the exalted Lamb(5:8). They sink to the ground, offer worship, and cast down their crowns before the throne of the eternal and omnipotent God with songs of praise. According to 5:8 they rather offer priestly ministry for the earthly community as R. H. Charles noted:

Since the Elders are not conceived in any way as kings, since they never act as judges and are never consulted by God as His assessors, but are described as angels discharging priestly(v.8) and Levitical functions, the most reasonable interpretation is that which identifies them with the angelic representatives of the twenty-four priestly orders.¹⁴

¹⁴R. H. Charles, The Revelation of St. John. (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: Clark, 1971), 1:131.

The divine service in heaven accompanies the events of redemption and judgment on earth, which the elders inaugurate and conclude with gesture and song. There is no suggestion that these elders are redeemed and transfigured men. They are so only as a higher class of angels which is closer to the throne of God than the others and which is entrusted in a peculiar way with His secrets.

e. 2 and 3 John. With no further definition and no mention of any name, the author of 2 and 3 John calls himself ὁ πρεσβύτερος . In so doing he appeals to an authority which had hitherto been recognized, not merely by the congregation addressed, but which was now contested by his opponent Diotrephes.

What does the term πρεσβύτερος mean here? It can hardly refer to the age of the author, for it obviously expresses a special authority and dignity. It cannot be regarded as a modest term for the apostolic dignity of the author, for the conduct of the opponent would have been quite impossible in relation to an apostle, and in such a conflict the author would certainly not refrain from appealing to his apostolic status. Finally, πρεσβύτερος cannot denote the member of a local presbytery. Hence the title πρεσβύτερος in 2 John and 3 John cannot be integrated into either an episcopal or a presbyterian form of government. The elder, with his wishes and works, is outside any ecclesiastical constitution.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING ELDERSHIP

A. POST-APOSTOLIC FATHERS AND THE EARLY CHURCH

The most important and also the most difficult phenomenon in the process of church organization is the rise and development of the episcopate as distinct from the presbyteriate. This institution comes to view in the second century as the supreme spiritual office and is retained, to this day, by all Roman and Greek Chrisendom and by a last part of the Evangelical Church, especially the Anglican communion.¹

During the life-time of the apostles, those eye- and ear-witnesses of the divine-human life of Jesus, there was no room for a proper bishop, and those who were so called must have held only a subordinate place. In the first century, the church was, as yet, a strictly supernatural organization, as a stranger in their world, standing with one foot in eternity and longing for the second coming of her heavenly bridegroom. The episcopal constitution provided the church with an extremely simple but compact and freely expansible organization with its feet planted firmly on earth. Thus the church became an institution for the education of her infant people, and fell into the path of historical development. She also was faced with the danger of a secularization which reached its height just when the hierarchy became complete in the Roman church and which finally necessitated a reformation on the basis of apostolic

¹Phillip Schaff, History of Christian Church. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmann, 1897), 2:133.

Christianity. This secularization began with the growing power of the bishop, even before the time of Constantine and Byzantine court orthodoxy.

It is significant to observe the traces of transitional development from the presbyterial to the episcopal church structure in the writings of the apostolic fathers in the early Christian church.

1. Clement of Rome

Geographically and chronologically 1 Clement is close to 1 Peter. This is the most important document for the history of the presbyteriate in the post-apostolic age. His letter was written concerning the feud that had broken out in the Church of Corinth. Lightfoot describes the cause of the troubles in that church as follows:

A feud had broken out in the Church of Corinth. Presbyters appointed by Apostles, or their immediate successors, had been unlawfully deposed. A spirit of insubordination was rife. The letter of Clement was written to rebuke these irregularities.²

On a broad basis it defends the rights and position of the elders against a congregation which had been led by agitators to depose some of its presbyters. Clement's letter concerning the Corinthian

²J. B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers (London: Macmillan, 1891), p. 4.

revolt reads thus:

Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect fore-knowledge of this, they appointed those (ministers) already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. We are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ, in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry. For our sin will not be small, if we eject from the episcopate (oversight) those who have blamelessly and holily fulfilled its duties.³

The first and repeated argument of 1 Clement against the Corinthian revolt is that it is a violation of the command to honour the aged. *πρεσβύτεροι* is used in this general way at the beginning of the letter, whereas in later verses, which deal more precisely with the dispute, the *πρεσβύτεροι* are more office-bearers in the congregation.

There are some distinguished office-bearers within the college who are ordained to a sacrificial ministry. They are called "leaders" and also *ἐπισκόποι*. This is most important. In 1 Clement the concept of order is so consistently stressed as to be elevated to the rank of a dogmatic principle. The vital point is that the task of the presbyteriate is no longer the safeguarding of the apostolic tradition, and the institution itself is declared to be a basic element in the tradition.

³Clement, "The First Epistle of Clement" in Ante-Nicene Christian Library. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1870), 1:44.

2. Ignatius

In Ignatius the presbyters have a fixed place in an integrated hierarchy at the head of which stands the bishop. The members of the presbytery stand around a bishop as his council. As Harnack comments, concerning the relation between "Ignatius and Episcopate" :

In general "Nothing in opposition to the bishop, nothing without the bishop," is the alpha and omega of the Ignatian epistles. In subordination, yet next in order to him, stands a college of presbyters (τὸ πρεσβυτεριον or οἱ πρεσβύτεροι) which acts as a council (but their powers are hardly touched upon at all), and they have no other name than "the presbyters" (their number is not stated).⁴

The presbyters are expected to like a finely woven spiritual crown for the bishop, to whom they are subordinate, as associates or representatives of the hierarchy, with the bishop at its head, so that the church must obey them as a holy and spiritual order. From Ignatius' point of view of both Church and ministry, it is clear that the congregational duty of obedience is not based on the command to revere the elderly (as in 1 Pet. and 1 Clement) or on the constitutional agreements of appointment by the apostles or authority as bearers of the tradition, but solely on the mystery of the unity of the church, which reflects the mystery of the hierarchy of God, Christ and the apostles and which is depicted as a cultic eonic reality.⁵ Harnack again describes the position of the bishop,

⁴A. Harnack, Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries. (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1910), P. 84.

⁵G. Bornkamm, " πρεσβύτερος " in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 6:675.

according to Ignatius, as follows:

This accounts for its being constantly proclaimed that in the individual community the bishop stands in place of God or of Christ, the presbyters in the place of the apostles.⁶

Likewise, the interrelating of the presbyters and the apostles is very common in Ignatius. In another place he says, "Follow, all of you, the presbytery as the apostles, reverence the deacons as the commandment of God."⁷ Hence his epistles present a picture radically different from that indicated by the constitution obtaining at Rome at the time and some decades later.

3. Polycarp

The hierarchy of the office and position of the bishop had not yet been established throughout the churches of Asia Minor since Ignatius emphasized his position as bishop. This is confirmed by the letter of Polycarp, who is so close to Ignatius in many things. While Ignatius puts emphasis upon the unique position of the bishop, it is surprising that in Polycarp's letter to the Philippians he says nothing about this special position, nor does he mention a bishop or bishops at all but only refers to deacons and presbyters:

In like manner should the deacons be blameless before the face of His righteousness, as being the servants of God and Christ, and not of men. They must not be slanderers, double-tongued, or lovers of money, but temperate in all things, compassionate, industrious, walking according to the truth of the Lord, who was the servant of all....Wherefore, it is needful to abstain from all these things, being subject to the presbyters and deacons,

⁶Harnack, p. 85.

⁷Willston Walker, A History of the Christian Church. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 76.

as unto God and Christ.⁸

This can hardly be explained by the theory that there were no bishops in Philippi, since we read of bishops and deacons there even in Paul's time (Phil. 1:2). It is assumed that the bishop of Philippi discharges a multiple office. The office had long since been absorbed into the wider body of presbyters and the episcopal title was no longer used, because, for Polycarp, this denoted the monarchical bishop. He himself does not understand this episcopal office hierarchically, but definitely puts himself on the same level as the presbyters. We learn about the functions of presbyters:

And the presbyters also must be compassionate, merciful towards all men, turning back the sheep that are gone astray, visiting all the infirm, not neglecting a widow or an orphan or a poor man: but providing always for that which is honorable in the sight of God and of men, abstaining from all anger, respect of persons, unrighteous judgment, being far from all love of money, not quick to believe anything against any man, not hasty in judgment, knowing that we all are debtors of sin.⁹

The deposed presbyter Valens has forfeited the office committed to him by embezzling congregational funds. The duties of the presbyters include financial supervision and the administration of charity, as well as disciplinary functions, pastoral care and the preaching of the Word. In all this Polycarp agrees with Acts, 1 Peter, and especially the Pastorals, which are obviously closely related in time and place. We can see in Polycarp that in practice,

⁸Polycarp, "The Epistle of Polycarp" in Ante-Nicene Christian Library, 1:72.

⁹Ibid.

developing monarchical episcopacy could merge quite smoothly with a presbyterian order. However, in contrast with the Pastorals, episcopacy is present in Polycarp only in fact and not in title.

4. The "Presbyters" of Papias, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origin

Here πρεσβύτερος is not a title for office-bearers in the local congregation but is used to designate members of the older generation who are seen as reliable teachers and mediators of the authentic tradition. This is richly illustrated, especially in Papias and Irenaeus, but also in Clement of Alexandria, Origin and Hippolytus.

Papias. He wants to assemble in his expositions everything that he could remember of what he had once learned from the elders:

If, then, any one who had attended on the elders came, I asked minutely after their sayings, - what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by any other of the Lord's disciples: which things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I imagined that what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice.¹⁰

The πρεσβύτεροι mentioned here are to be regarded as pupils of the apostles, but there is no mention of linking the elders and their pupils with the offices of the organized congregation. The picture presented here agrees with what we discovered in 2 and 3 John,

¹⁰Papias, "Fragments of Papias" in Ante-Nicene Christian Library, 1:442.

except that Papias stresses, for the first time, the special authority of the elders as pupils of the apostles and hence the legitimacy of their own pupils, whereas the elder of 2 and 3 John does not think it necessary to establish his credentials and those of his envoys.¹¹

Irenaeus. He makes use of the books of Papias and adduces a considerable number of doctrines as the teaching of the elders. He holds that these elders are the disciples of apostles. They stood in personal relation to John, the Lord's disciple, in Asia. Polycarp was one of them, the blessed and apostolic presbyter. Irenaeus, as a young man, heard him tell of his intimate converse with John and others who had seen the Lord, and of the reminiscences of the Lord's miracles and teachings.¹² Elders, for Irenaeus, are not merely sponsors of the accounts of the earthly Jesus and His sayings but are also teaching authorities for the true exposition of Scripture and the doctrines. In the introduction of his book (*Contra Heresies*) Irenaeus sharply distinguishes these elders from false presbyters and emphasizes the authority of their demand for obedience by ascribing to them not only the apostolic succession of doctrine but also that of the episcopate.

Clement of Alexandria. Clement refers to the elders as teachers of the past:

These preserved the true tradition of blessed doctrine which they had received from the holy apostles Peter and James, John and Paul

¹¹Bornkamm, 6:677.

¹²Ibid.

as children from the father....and thus came with God's help even to us to plant that patriarchal and apostolic seed (in us).¹³

Here the πρεσβύτεροι are authorities for the collecting and transmission of stories of the apostles and for the correct exposition of the Old Testament and the New Testament Scriptures. For Clement πρεσβύτερος is not just a term for pupils of the apostles. It is used for teachers of the preceding generation to the degree that they pass on the apostolic tradition and true knowledge.¹⁴

The πρεσβύτεροι of Clement are essentially the same as those of Papias and Irenaeus, but there is one radical difference from Irenaeus. Clement never couples the teaching succession of the elders with the episcopal succession.

Origen. Origen does not speak of a free teaching office independent of the clerical office. In him, too, as in Clement of Alexandria, there is an appeal to the exegesis of earlier men called πρεσβύτεροι, but for Origen it is important and evident that teachers should belong to the clergy, and the gulf between the two should be bridged. He was not satisfied with his own status as a non-ordained teacher in Alexandria but finally obtained ordination as a clerical presbyter in Caesarea.

5. Origin of the Episcopate

The officers of local congregations emerged charged with

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

carrying forward in particular places the work begun by the apostles and delegates. They were of two kinds, Presbyters or Bishops, and Deacons or Helpers. They multiplied in direct proportion to the spread of Christianity, while the number of the apostles diminished by death and could not be witnesses of the life and resurrection of Christ. If the extraordinary offices were necessary for the founding and being of the Church, the ordinary officers are needed for its preservation and development.

The terms " πρεσβύτερος " and " ἐπίσκοπος " denote one and the same in the New Testament. The only difference is that the former is borrowed from the Synagogue, the second from the Greek communities. One signifies the dignity, the other the duty.¹⁵

The identity of those officers is very evident from the following facts: a) the same officers of the Church of Ephesus are alternately call presbyters (Acts 20:17) and bishops (Acts 20:28), b) Paul sends greetings to the "bishops" and "deacons" of Philippi, but omits the presbyters because they were included in the first term, c) In the Pastorals, where Paul intends to give the qualifications for all church officers, he again mentions only two, bishops and deacons, but uses the term presbyter, afterwards, for bishop.¹⁶

With the beginning of the second century, the two terms are distinguished and designate two officers as seen in Ignatius: The bishop is regarded first as the head of a congregation surrounded by a council of presbyters, and afterwards as the head of a diocese and

¹⁵Schaff, 2:491.

¹⁶Ibid.

successor of the apostles. Likewise, the episcopate grew out of the presidency of the presbytery.¹⁷

The origin of the presbytero-episcopal office is not recorded in the New Testament, but, when it is first mentioned in the congregation at Jerusalem, A.D. 44, it appears already as a settled institution (Act. 11:30). As every Jewish synagogue was ruled by elders, it was very natural that every Jewish Christian congregation should adopt this form of government at once.¹⁸ This may be the reason why the writer of the Acts finds it unnecessary to give an account of the origin, while he reports the origin of the deaconate which arose from a special emergency and had no precise analogy in the organization of the synagogue.

The office of the presbyter-bishops was to teach and rule the particular congregation committed to their charge. They were the regular "pastor and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). To them belonged the direction of public worship, the administration of discipline, the care of souls, and the management of church property. They were appointed by the apostles or their delegates, with the approval of the congregation, itself, which supported them by voluntary contributions. They were solemnly introduced to their office by the apostles or by their fellow presbyters through prayers and the laying on of hands (Act. 14:23, Tit. 1:5 etc.).¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., 2:496.

B. MEDIEVAL

The conditions prevalent in the early Church are inconsistent with the possible existence of either Presbyterianism or Episcopacy as observed in the early Church. As mentioned before, we find both presbyters and bishops mentioned in the New Testament, and the problem of their relationship can not be passed over. Jerome holds that the bishop and the presbyter were originally identical,²⁰ and Lightfoot contends that the episcopate was developed from the presbyteriate by elevation.²¹ Harnack says that the two offices were distinct from the beginning.²² Even if we hold that πρεσβύτερος was the official name and ἐπίσκοπος described the function, still the problem remains the same, "How did the bishop come to overshadow the presbyter and finally reduce him to a definitely inferior position?" The most feasible explanation ever suggested seems to be that which is founded on the relationship between the bishop and the Eucharist.

John Dall explains thus:

While the ἁγία still existed, the official in charge of the celebration would enjoy a distinctive place, not only in the Church itself, but in the eyes of outsiders. The bishop's preeminence would develop with it as the ἁγία fell into disuse and the sacramental aspect of the Eucharist gained prominence. Once the bishop had definitely asserted his special position among the officials of the Church, circumstances favoured his steady elevation.²³

²⁰Ibid.

²¹J. B. Lightfoot, Dissertations on the Apostolic Age. (London: Macmillan, 1892), P. 154.

²²Henry C. Sheldon, History of the Christian Church. (New York: Crowell, 1895), P. 607.

²³John Dall, "Presbyterianism" in James Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1926), 10:246.

Historically Roman imperialism and Jewish nationalism were opposing each other about the end of the first century. Jewish Christianity was rapidly disappearing, all the conditions were in favour of the Gentile ἐπίσκοπος , and his function was recognized as anti-Jewish πρεσβύτερος .

When the Church was faced with heresy within and hostility without, the concentration of power in few hands was much needed. The formulation of a creed and of a collection of Holy Scriptures was followed by the need for an authoritative interpretation of both. The bishop, already prominent, naturally became the authority of the Church in matters of the faith, and apostolic succession followed in due course:

The bishop thus emerges from the comparative obscurity of earlier times with a status in matters of the faith equal to that which he had previously enjoyed in matters of administration.²⁴

The evolution of territorial from congregational episcopacy was completed by the gradual assimilation of the ecclesiastical system to the imperial. The fall of the Empire, the transference of barbarian respect from the Empire to the Church, the conversion and absorption into the Church of the northern peoples, all assisted in the process of closer organization and developed into the great medieval hierarchy--the feudal system being theoretically crowned by the twin summits of a papacy supreme in spiritual affairs and an empire in temporal.²⁵

24Ibid.

25Ibid.

Presbyterians can find the beginnings of their history either in the New Testament or in the book of Exodus, and medieval continuation of it has been too much neglected. History had been preparing its way through centuries, even in the Middle Age:

The Reformation system might seem so sudden and complete a contrast to previous developments as to justify Calvin's theory of reversion to primitive Christianity by the ignoring of medievalism, but nothing ever makes its appearance in history without preparation. We may discern certain medieval tendencies which led up to their work, while we can not neglect the genius of Calvin and the rest by explaining their systems out of any or all of their antecedents.²⁶

The practical needs and problems aided in the exaltation of the ecclesiastical society and the priestly hierarchy at the expense of the intellectual and homiletic interests of the Church. However, the homiletic, intellectual and individual elements never completely died. Practical needs might favour the creation and maintenance of a rigid monarchical system which deprived the individual of all intellectual range, yet the essential Christian truth of the worth of the individual before God never fell out of sight.²⁷

Throughout the growth of ecclesiasticism we can see a continuous process of revolt against it which was suppressed in the movement of Montanism but defied extinction. For example, Athanasius was faced by Arius, Augustine by Pelagius, Bernard by Abelard, Aquinas by Scotus so that the slavery of intellect was always incomplete. In monasticism we can discern most clearly the opposition of individualism to the

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

tyranny of the institution. Even though the forms of Montanism, Novatianism, and Donatism succumbed successively to the need for closer organization, their spirit persisted in the form of monasticism and established an unbreakable hold on Western Christendom.

Gregory Smith observes, concerning the monasticism, as follows:

The history of monasticism is one of the strongest problems in the history of the world. For monasticism ranks among the most powerful influences which have shaped the destinies of Christendom and civilization.²⁸

The conversion, education and civilization of North-western Europe were almost entirely the work of monks from the beginning of monastic history. Accordingly, tension developed between the monks and the episcopate. While the episcopate succeeded in forcing the monks into the priesthood, monasticism responded by forcing celibacy on the Western clergy.²⁹ The opposition between the secular clergy and the monks runs throughout medieval times:

The relation of the monks to the clergy and the jealous rivalries between the monasteries and the secular clergy are very remarkable. Originally monks were regarded as laymen, although even from the first there were instances of persons becoming monks after being ordained. As monks, all ranked collectively with the lay, not the clerical part of the Christian community.³⁰

This monastic side of the opposition represents the preparation for the Reformed Churches. While the secular clergy obeyed a monarchic bishop, the monks obeyed a presbyter-abbot unconditionally:

The keynote of the arch in the monastic system was the supremacy of the abbot: this gave cohesion and stability to the fabric. His

²⁸I. Gregory Smith, Christian Mysticism. (London: Innes, 1892), p. 1.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 94-95.

³⁰Ibid.

was an almost absolute authority, a paternal despotism. To hear was to obey. Although the abbot was to take his turn with the other monks, according to the Rule of Benedict, in the menial work of the house, that he might set an example of industry and humility, in government his voice was to be final. Within the precincts he reigned alone, and his watchful eye followed his monks everywhere.³¹

Their vow of poverty gave expression to the truth that a man is of value apart from his property, the vow of celibacy destroyed the feudal fetish of family prestige, and their vow of obedience was that of free-will obedience to a superior in whose election they had a voice. Every direct specific purpose of the monk seemed, in the long run, to have been reversed or to have proved a failure, yet there was a deeper purpose of it which could not be defeated: that is, the accomplishment of individual personality.³²

It is in the presbyterial conception of Christian organization that we discern the germ of the Reformation. Whereas the secular clergy and the episcopate had all along represented sacramentarianism in worship and rigid solidarity in government; the monastic system, on the other hand, had stood for the homiletic aspect of worship and a form of organization that was more representative of the popular voice. Likewise, the essential difference between Catholic and Protestant subsists throughout the Middle Ages between the episcopate and monasticism, and it required favorable circumstances to set on foot the process of disruption which became the Reformation.³³

³¹Ibid., p. 125.

³²A. V. G. Allen, Christian Institutions. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1898), p. 173.

³³Dall, 10:247.

Actually the reformers, following the monastic lead, were more concerned with teaching than with administration, and they kept a reasonably open mind on the question of organization:

Martin Luther, from whom this protest came, is one of the few men of whom it may be said that the history of the world was profoundly altered by his work. Not a organizer or a politician, he moved men by the power of a profound religious faith, resulting in unshakeable trust in God, and in direct, immediate and personal relations to Him, which brought a confident salvation that left no room for the elaborate hierarchical and sacramental structures of the Middle Ages.³⁴

Ecclesiastical organization was perhaps the least important activity of Martin Luther and the Lutheran Church. In common with the Calvinists, this Church recognized the priesthood of all believers and the parity of all ministers.

C. REFORMATION

The term "Presbyterianism" is derived from the Greek word for "elder" (πρεσβύτερος). This term may be applied, in a general sense, to the theory of the Church which aims at realizing its visible unity through government by presbyters, clerics, and laymen. Such elders are set apart by their peers by popular consent, yet they are all of equal status.³⁵ The Presbyterian Church is organized for purposes of ecclesiastical administration in Church courts, which rise one above another in an ascending scale, from the congregational to national.³⁶ In a sense, Presbyterianism

³⁴Walker, p. 302.

³⁵John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 417.

³⁶Dall, 10:245.

is popularly used to denote the results of the concrete efforts made to realize the idea which originated in the work of John Calvin, was carefully elaborated by those who followed him, and became a definite form of Church organization with a distinctive type of doctrine, morals and rituals. There are three kinds or forms of Church government, one of which is the Presbyterian form:

All forms of Church government are ultimately reducible to three--Prelatic, Congregational, and Presbyterian. The Prelatic type of government, exemplified in the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, is characterized by the gradation of ministerial rank, by the institution of the diocesan episcopate and by the emphasis laid on the distinction between clergy and laity. The Congregational type recognizes neither gradation of ministerial rank nor gradation of Church courts; it places all ministers on an equal footing, and makes of every congregation an independent judicature. It is the boast of Presbyterianism that it avoids the dangers of both its rivals on the other hand, it has sometimes been charged with combining the evils of both without any admixture of their advantages. As opposed to prelacy, the Presbyterian type of government rests upon the equality of ministerial status, and seeks to give ecclesiastical power to the members of the Church instead of to clerical individuals or councils; as opposed to Congregationalism, it seeks to realize the unity of the Church, by entrusting to a carefully devised system of graded Church courts legislative, executive, and judicial, not merely advisory, powers.³⁷

Presbyterianism seeks to avoid, on the one hand, the absolute subjection of individual congregations to government from without and above and, on the other hand, their absolute independence of all restraint. Of the three great types of Church government it is, therefore, the middle one between Congregationalism and Episcopacy.

³⁷Ibid., 10:265.

1. John Calvin

It is very unfortunate that Protestantism was divided into two great groups--Lutheran and Reformed. The Lutheran was led by Martin Luther, as its name indicates, the Reformed or Presbyterian by John Calvin and others. Calvin was undoubtedly the chief formulator of Presbyterianism as Lefferts Loetscher states regarding him:

John Calvin (1509-1564), a Frenchman born in Noyon, France, was the chief formulator of Presbyterianism. Protestants before him had suggested many of his ideas, and later followers made changes, but Calvin more than any other one man gave to Presbyterianism its distinctive character.³⁸

The year in which Calvin was born, 1509, Luther took a baccalaureate degree in Bible and was already giving lectures. Before Calvin reached his teens, the Reformation in Germany had already reached a zenith in Luther's ideas and actions. When Calvin published his first edition of his famous "Institutes of Christian Religion" in 1536, at the age of twenty-seven, Luther was already fifty-three and within a decade of his death. In 1541, five years before Luther's death, Calvin was to settle in Geneva for the second time for a twenty-three year ministry, until the day of his death. Thus Calvin is definitely among the second generation reformers, though second to none.³⁹

³⁸Lefferts A. Loetscher, A Brief History of Theterians. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), p. 23.

³⁹John Dillenberger (ed.), John Calvin. (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), p. 1.

In Geneva Calvin developed one of his most distinctive achievements--Presbyterian Church government, providing for four types of church officer: pastors, teachers, elders and deacons. Calvin says as follows:

There are four orders of office instituted by our Lord for the government of his Church.

First, pastors; then doctors, next elders; and fourth deacons. Hence if we will have a Church well ordered and maintained we ought to observe this form of government.⁴⁰

The clergy were equal without superior bishops over them, and the lay elders, twelve in number, were elected by civil magistrates from their own number to share with the clergy in church government. These principles paralleled the representative civil government that had emerged in such commercial cities as Geneva and would contribute greatly, in later years, towards the development of democracy in the Western world.

2. Presbyterianism and Ruling Elder

The following is stated by Calvin regarding the office of Elders in his Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances:

Their office is to have oversight of the life of everybody, to admonish amicably those whom they see to be erring or to be living a disordered life, and, where it is required, to enjoin fraternal corrections themselves and along with others.⁴¹

The ruling elders were, in the church, what the magistrates were in

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 229.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 235. Quoted from Calvin: Theological Treatises. (Library of Christian Classics, 22; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 58-72.

the city. Their function was a purely spiritual one; they were confined to the judging of spiritual offences and the infliction of spiritual penalties in order to secure the repentance of the offender. Although Calvin, in accordance with his general principles, attempted to mark off this eldership with its ecclesiastical sphere of action and separate it completely from the magistracy with its civil functions, he could not quite secure what he wanted and ended in an even worse position because of the compromise which followed.⁴² The election of elders was described by Calvin as follows:

In the present condition of the Church, it would be good to elect two of the Little Council, four of the Council of Sixty, and six of the Council of Two Hundred, men of good and honest life, without reproach and beyond suspicion, and above all fearing God and possessing spiritual prudence. These should be so elected that there be some in every quarter of the city, to keep an eye on everybody.⁴³

He was unable to arrange for the election of the elders by the Church alone or purely on the ground of spiritual and moral fitness. The twelve, in the first instance, were really civil functionaries and a committee of the Council, and only secondarily and nominally did they form part of a Church court. Calvin may have had a paramount and continuous influence in that court, but his influence was a purely moral one and he never presided. Indeed, in spite of the presence of these twelve councillors in the Consistory, along with the ministers,

⁴²Dall, 10:250.

⁴³Dillenberger, p. 235.

Calvin had much trouble in trying to secure for it the right of excommunication. It was agreed that the persistent offender should be handed over to the civil power if no repentance resulted from judgments up to and including excommunication. As this applied to doctrinal as well as moral cases, it really amounted to a declaration of the right of persecution as Dillenger comments on it:

But like other Protestants and Catholics of the time, Calvin was responsible for death penalties of divergences less acute than those represented by Servetus. Calvin and his time are infinitely more guilty than the facts of the Servetus case would indicate. But Servetus came to symbolize the victims of the intolerance of that age; and Calvin became the symbol of the persecutors of that age.⁴⁴

In this respect Calvin is not in advance of his age, and his readiness to admit the interference of civil power weakens his position as a religious leader.

It was Calvin's machinery for the doctrinal and moral regeneration of Geneva that consisted of a verbally inspired Word of God, ministers to expound the same, a Consistory to enforce it, and the Council to deal with recalcitrants.

3. Presbyterian Polity

The Reformed Christians have been regarding church polity of crucial importance because they are convinced that God calls the Christian to a life of obedience in and through the polity of the church. The ultimate basis for the organized life of the church is

⁴⁴Ibid.

not human wisdom but the will of God, which is the orderly life for His people. Therefore, the Christian is elected or called to order. "He who is elected in Christ finds his personhood by taking his place in the harmonious structure of the holy community."⁴⁵ The form of the church, for example, either encourages or discourages a person to exercise the responsibility of faith or to depend upon the church as an institution for decisions that should be personal responsibilities. The priesthood of all believers, therefore, is encouraged or discouraged by the form and shape of the church's life.⁴⁶

The Reformed tradition insists on the importance of its polity and also the radical subordination of polity to the gospel. However, the Reformed theology has never made the existence of the church dependent upon polity as K. Barth states well:

The Church is when it takes place that God lets certain men live as His servants, His friends, His children, the witnesses to the reconciliation of the world with Himself as it has taken place in Jesus Christ, the preachers of the victory which has been won in Him over sin and suffering and death, the heralds of His future revelation in which the glory of the Creator will be declared to all creation as that of His love and faithfulness and mercy. The Church is when it happens to these men in common that they may receive the verdict on the whole world of men which has been pronounced in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.⁴⁷

Calvin was convinced that the gospel, alone, is necessary for the church's existence. This made possible a catholicity in relation

⁴⁵David Little, Religion, Order, and Law. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 68.

⁴⁶John H. Leith, Introduction to the Reformed Tradition. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p. 146.

⁴⁷Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 4/2:650-651.

to other churches of the Reformation (even Roman Catholicism) that would not have been possible otherwise.⁴⁸ According to him full agreement as to polity was not necessary for Christian unity. Church history shows that while Reformed theology has been overwhelmingly associated with presbyterian polity, it has thrived, at times, with congregational polity and has lived with functional and jurisdictional episcopal systems.⁴⁹

Calvin gave more attention to polity than did any other major reformer. One of his most influential contributions to the Genevan Church was the creation of the consistory (session) made up of the ministers and elders. One consistory served the metropolitan area. Calvin insisted upon the consistory's responsibility for discipline of the congregation in the areas of morals, of participation in worship, and of Christian knowledge. He fought and achieved for the consistory a measure of independence and freedom from the state in the performance of these tasks.

Calvin's system of church government is as follows:

Four basic features for church government: (1) the autonomy of the church--independence from the state and competence to administer its own internal discipline; (2) the unity of the church--interdependence of the individual local congregations in a graded series of disciplinary courts, or judicatories; (3) the parity of ministers--corporate uniformity of clerical power substantiating the presbytery and its varied functions; and (4) the representation of the people--ratification by the laity of the clerical power and functions. All four features

⁴⁸Leith, p. 147.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 152.

were thus mutually integrated and geared toward the ultimate realization of a church wholly incorporated in Christ.⁵⁰

This kind of church government was observed no longer from above but from below. The call of the people and the approval of their fellow men replaced episcopal consecration in the making of a minister. The people received equal shares in the government of the Church. The responsibility of officials to the general body became a recognized feature of church organization. Thus, an essentially democratic spirit is discerned behind all the formal shapes assumed by Reformed Church constitutions.

Presbyterianism is not a fixed pattern of Church life but a developing pattern that has both continuity and diversity.⁵¹ Many features of the system, such a life-time or term service as tenures for elders, vary from time to time and place to place. For example, while Scottish Presbyterianism developed from the General Assembly down to the local congregation, American Presbyterianism developed from the congregation and presbytery, moved up to the synod and the general assembly.⁵²

4. Summary

It is generally recognized that Calvin, as a parish minister

⁵⁰E. A. Smith, "Presbyterianism" in New Catholic Encyclopedia. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 11:747.

⁵¹Robert M. Kingdon, Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement 1564-1572. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 37- .

⁵²Leith, p. 155.

and churchman, contributed to the structure and operation of the Christian Church according to the Reformed principle. He is completely different from Luther in this respect. While Luther was professor of theology in a university, Calvin was pastor and administrator in a relatively free Geneva. Dillenberger states about the difference between the great reformers:

Sure it is obvious that such theological thing is formed in the parish and the church. Luther was a professor of theology, who from that base of operation changed the form of the church by everything that came in the wake of his major breakthrough. Calvin, the pastor-preacher-churchman, fashioned the church in a city which for generations was regarded as the beacon set on the hill, the model for all to follow.⁵³

Even though Calvin possessed the necessary critical insight to construct a clear picture of the New Testament Church, he must have found it impossible to reproduce a primitive creed and polity with perfect faithfulness. It is now realized by modern scholars that no one form of Church government is to be definitely identified in the Bible more than another.⁵⁴ It is hard for Presbyterians to claim the Presbyterian form of government as if it were the only form of Church government expressly sanctioned by the Word of God. If an advocate of Presbyterianism makes use of the New Testament today, he must claim to reproduce the spirit and intention of the primitive Church, and not its mechanism.

⁵³Dillenberger, p. 17.

⁵⁴Dall, 10:245.

D. PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONARIES IN KOREA

1. Protestants before Presbyterian Missionaries

In 1832 the first Protestant missionary came to visit Korea. His name was Carl A. F. Gutzlaff, a German who had served in China and was a friend of the famous pioneer missionary to China, Robert Morrison. In the same year, the East India Company sent Gutzlaff as interpreter with the British ship, "The Lord Amherst," to investigate the possibilities of opening the northern ports of China to British trade. Robert Morrison sent with Gutzlaff a large stock of Chinese Scriptures to be distributed along the coast. After visiting Chinese ports as far north as Shangtung, the ship crossed the Yellow Sea to Korea and anchored near the James Hall Group of islands. While in Korean waters, a petition and gifts were sent to the king, requesting an opening for trade. Gutzlaff distributed Bibles and tracts (in Chinese, of course) while waiting for a reply.⁵⁵

It is reported that he met one of the Koreans and gave him a copy of the Lord's Prayer in Chinese. The Korean then wrote it out in Korean pronunciation, in hangul, but he then expressed great alarm and "passed his hand repeatedly across his throat intimating that if the chiefs knew he would lose his life." This fact indicates that there were a few who knew something about Christianity.

⁵⁵Allen Clark, A History of the Church in Korea. (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1971), pp. 59-60.

Gutzlaff's visit to Korea was too brief to leave any great results, but he expressed his faith and hope of the gospel for Korea:

The Scriptures teach us that God can bless even these feeble beginnings. Let us hope that better days will dawn soon for Corea.⁵⁶

He had sent two copies of the Chinese Bible to the king and had distributed many more along the coast. It is not known what became of these.

The next Protestant missionary to attempt to enter the forbidden land of Korea was Robert J. Thomas, a native of Wales, who had come to China as a missionary.

He was born the son of the pastor of a congregational church in Wales on September 7, 1840 and was granted the B. A. degree from New College, University of London, in 1859. He was awarded diploma of Divinity in the college in 1863 on condition that he would become a missionary to China.⁵⁷ In 1865, he was in Cheefoo, where he met two refugee Catholic Christians from Korea in the home of Alexander Williamson, an agent of the National Bible Society of Scotland. Thomas met these men and offered to return with them to Korea. He left Cheefoo with them on September 4, 1865, arriving at the Whanghai coast and spending two and a half months in this area before returning to China. He was waiting for a chance to come to Korea

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 61.

⁵⁷Kyung Bae Min, A History of Korean Christian Church. (Seoul: Dae-han Kidokyo, 1982), pp. 139-140.

but his plan had been delayed. Finally he embarked on an American ship, the "General Sherman", which was loaded with goods which were likely to be saleable in Korea. He brought some Chinese Bibles to Korea. The ship came to Korea, entering the mouth of the Taitong river about the end of August, 1866, and wishing to open trade with Korea.⁵⁸ The Korean governor was terrified at the idea and replied that it was impossible. At Suk-som, an island in the Taitong river, the captain of the ship and the commander of the Korean garrison met on the ship. The two men could not reach a peaceful agreement, and fighting broke out between them. Firing from the ship continued off and on for two weeks. Finally the ship was set afire and allowed to drift down the river on September 3, 1866. The crew, attempting to escape, jumped into the water and all were killed as they came ashore. As Thomas came ashore, he offered his slayer a Bible, which was refused. He then knelt down and prayed. The man who killed him felt that he had killed a good man and took the Bible home with him. This man's nephew, Lee Young-Tai, later graduated from Soongsil College, in Pyengyang, and worked with an American missionary, Dr. W. D. Reynolds, on the Bible revision work. Thus Thomas became the first Protestant martyr in Korea.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Clark, p. 62.

⁵⁹Hi Kun Chang, The History of Korean Presbyterian Church. (Seoul: Dong A Publishing Co., 1970), p. 46.

Alexander Williamson never set foot on Korean soil. He had been seeking an opportunity to convey the Christian gospel to the Korean people. He was a native of Scotland and came to China as a missionary, like Thomas. On the anniversary of Thomas' martyrdom, he decided to deliver gospel materials to Koreans and came to "Korean Gate", a border town between Korea and Manchuria, where traders came to exchange their goods with the Chinese people. Many Christian materials and single books of Gospels were sold by him to Koreans. He did not give those books to them free lest they would consider those materials to be of no value.⁶⁰

The Reverend John Ross and his brother-in-law, the Reverend McIntyre were missionaries of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, stationed in Manchuria. In 1881 Ross completed the translation of the first Gospel with the help of a Korean friend in Manchuria. He found a Korean peddler of medicines and sent him out with copies of the Gospels in his pack of medicines, to sell in the eastern Manchurian valleys, among the Koreans living there. After six months, the peddler became Christian himself and was baptized. In the winter of 1884, Ross made a trip to those valleys and baptized seventy-five people. This amazing result had come from the reading of the Scriptures.⁶¹ In 1882 the British and Foreign Bible Society began to publish the Ross translation of the four Gospels and Acts, and, in 1887,

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 47

⁶¹Clark, pp. 65-66.

they reprinted the entire Ross New Testament. The Word of God came to Korea earlier than the first Protestant missionary to Korea.

2. Presbyterian missionaries

Presbyterian missionary work in Korea began with a medical missionary, Dr. Horace N. Allen. He was assigned to China by the Presbyterian Board and had arrived on October 11, 1883, but had not decided on his work. He was advised by some prominent men in Shanghai to go to Korea and was offered letters of recommendation to foreigners in Korea. He then wrote to the Presbyterian Board in New York, asking permission to go to Korea. He was instructed by the Board to go to Korea on July 22, 1884 and left Shanghai on September 14, arriving in Inchon, Korea, on September 20 the same year. He was thus the first resident Protestant as well as the first Presbyterian missionary to enter Korea.⁶²

He was at once appointed physician (without salary) to the American Legation and to other diplomatic groups in Seoul, lastly as court physician. He was favored by the Korean king and was three times decorated. The Reverend Horace G. Underwood and the Reverend Henry G. Appenzeller had arrived in Japan, preparing to enter Korea. It is said that the two missionaries, together with Mrs. Appenzeller arrived in Inchon port on Easter morning, April 5, 1885, and they joined hands and jumped ashore together in order that no one might

⁶²Ibid., p. 76.

later say that either the Methodists or the Presbyterians had arrived first. However, this story seems to have no basis in fact. Actually it was Mrs. Appenzeller who was the first to step ashore, but the attitude reflected in this story is typical of the friendly spirit which has characterized the relations between these two groups of Christian workers.⁶³

In the early years of the missionary activities, Christianity faced strong opposition among Korean people because they were very suspicious of the Western religion and foreign influences.⁶⁴ Accordingly Underwood tried to get in touch with the people privately. He visited their homes and talked with them about the good news at their "Sarangbang".⁶⁵ We call this movement "Sarang-bang Evangelism." Underwood eagerly persuaded the people to convert to Christianity and gained one soul through this evangelism. This man, Noh Do Sa, was baptized by him on July 11, 1886, and became the first baptized Protestant.

Since no missionary was allowed to do his work in public, Underwood worked for Dr. Allen in the hospital. He had studied medicine for a year before leaving the United States. He also

⁶³Ibid., pp. 90-91.

⁶⁴Yong Bok Jun, A History of Korean Presbyterian Church. (Seoul: Seung Kwang Moon Sa, 1980) (Korean) p. 28.

⁶⁵This room is like a living room of American homes where guests and neighbors are invited for conferences or friendly conversations.

purchased a piece of property in Chung Dong and opened an orphanage for boys with the help of Mrs. Allen. On May 3, 1885, Dr. Scranton arrived and worked with Dr. Allen in the government hospital until the arrival of Dr. Heron, June 24th. In 1886, the Presbyterian Board send Miss Annie Ellers, a nurse, to work with women. She opened a women's department in the hospital.

While medical work was getting started, educational work was not far behind. People were eager for a Western education. As has happened with missionary works in other countries, many schools for boys and girls were founded for the people by Presbyterian and Methodist missionaries; so that the gospel of Christ reached them indirectly through those educational institutions.

After the Presbyterian Mission, the Reverend J. Henry Davies and his sister, Miss M. T. Davies, arrived in Korea from Australia in October, 1889, as representatives of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (Australia) and, in 1892, the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. began work, with the arrival of the Reverend L. B. Tate and others. As the missionaries of the Canadian Presbyterian Church, Dr. and Mrs. Robert G. Grierson, Reverend and Mrs. W.R. Foote and D. M. McCrae arrived in Korea and began work in 1898.⁶⁶ All those missions agreed among themselves to divide their mission areas geographically and contributed to the growth of the Presbyterian Church in Korea.

⁶⁶Clark, p. 110.

E. PRESBYTERIANISM IN KOREAN SOIL

Once the Gospel of Christ was planted in Korean soil by American missionaries, it grew fast and expanded rapidly in every direction. The first Presbyterian church, Saimoonan, was organized by Underwood in Seoul on September 12, 1887.⁶⁷ The second Presbyterian church, Nuldarigol (Wooden bridge), was organized in Pyengyang in 1892, and later the name of it was changed to "Jangdaehyun Church". The first theological seminary for training ministers was started in 1900, in Pyengyang, by the Northern Presbyterian Mission. In 1907, seven people graduated from the seminary, were ordained ministers and became the first Korean Protestant ministers. 1907 was an epoch-making year in the history of Korean churches: the fire of Church revival started to spread. In the same year, the Korean Presbytery was organized by the missionaries of the Northern and Southern Presbyterian Churches, the Canadian Presbyterian Church, and the Presbyterian Church of Australia, a historical event.⁶⁸

The General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church was formed at Pyungyang Women's Bible Institute on September 1, 1912. The total number of commissioners was 221 ministers, elders and missionaries who gathered there from local Presbyterian churches

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 100.

⁶⁸Yong Bok Jun, A History of Korean Presbyterian Church. (Seoul: Seung Kwang Moon Hwa Sa, 1980), p. 100.

in all parts of the country. This was an historical event in the history of Korea in the sense that it was the first nationwide gathering in this country in modern history.⁶⁹

The Korean Presbyterian Church is one of the fastest growing Protestant denominations in Korea. There are many causes for this rapid growth. One of them is the policy of self-government adopted by the missionaries in their early years of missionary-activities. The infant Presbyterian Mission invited Reverend and Mr.s John Nevius, veteran missionaries in Cheefoo, China, to come to Seoul. They spent two weeks discussing the principles of work which the young missionaries should bear in mind in starting their work in 1890. The Reverend Nevius had written a book entitled, "The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches." These Nevius Methods were principles, not for the work of the organized Church, but rather for the beginning stages of work in a new area.⁷⁰ The main points were the following:

1. Missionary personal evangelism through wide itineration.
2. Self-propagation. Every believer a teacher of someone and a learner from someone else better fitted. Every individual and group seeking to extend the work.
3. Self-government. Every group under its chosen unpaid leaders; circuits under their own paid helpers, who will later yield to pastors.
4. Self-support, which all chapels provided by the believers; each group, as soon as founded, beginning to pay toward the circuit helper's salary.

⁶⁹Kyung Bae Min, p. 293.

⁷⁰Clark, p. 114.

5. Systematic Bible study for every believer under his group leader and circuit helper.
6. Strict discipline enforced with Bible penalties.
7. Cooperation and union with other bodies, or at least territorial division.
8. Non-interference in law suits or any such matters.
9. General helpfulness, where possible, in the economic life of the people.⁷¹

This Nevius method was used and tried with success. In particular, the principles of this method applied to training workers to provide a "self-sacrificing, self-reliant, self-respecting minister."⁷²

This self-support meant financial responsibility for evangelistic work among the Koreans, by the Koreans, and also meant the establishment and maintenance of churches and ecclesiastical activities. Every missionary adhered strictly to the Nevius method and insisted on complete self-support from the beginning. The new converts could not have church structures unless they built them, nor the ministers unless they supported them. It was natural in the Korean Presbyterian Church that they should accept this as a matter of course, as the normal activity of Christians.

This self-support produced wholesome effects in the establishment of the Presbyterian Church in Korea. This policy taught the Presbyterian people the spirit of independence and the habit of systematic giving in church government. Dr. George Paik wrote, "The Korean Church, therefore, became a self-governing church, without

⁷¹Ibid., p. 115.

⁷²Lak-Geon George Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1970), p. 215.

passing through a stage of ecclesiastical tutelage under the Western Church."⁷³ This policy of self-support and self-government has become the spirit and motto of Presbyterianism in Korea.

⁷³Ibid., p. 294.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRACTICAL ROLE OF SESSIONS WITH KOREAN IMMIGRANT

CHURCHES IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

A. PRESBYTERIANISM AND PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN KOREA

It is generally recognized that the Presbyterian church has been the first-runner in church growth among the Protestant churches in Korea. Yong Bok Jun states the back-grounds for the rapid growth of the Christian Churches (especially the Presbyterian) as follows:

- 1) The rural customs of Korean countryside (the sentimental life of serene morning-calm country, 2) the origin of Korean people (keeping the purity of homogeneous people), 3) the geographic site of Korea (a buffer state like Israel), 4) the religions of Korea (Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Tsundonism. Shamanism greatly contributed to the spread of the Gospel), 5) the history of Korea (the people suffered by foreign powers) etc.¹

This description does not indicate any factors leading to the growth of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, showing only the receptivity of the Korean people. As indicated in the previous chapter, the Nevius Method contributed to it in the early stages of Missions. No one so far as I know, has exposed the basic reason for Korean Presbyterian growth. The three religions, Shamanism, Buddhism,

¹Yong Bok Jun, A History of Korean Presbyterian Church. (Seoul: Seung Kwang Moon Hwa Sa, 1980), p. 32.

and Confucianism prevailed in Korea before Christianity. These three religions have been syncretized for the masses of the people. As a result, the average Korean takes his religious ceremonies from ancestor worship, seeks the efficacy of Buddhistic prayers, devoutly bows his head at the shrine of mountain demons, and recites Confucian classics.² However, as Dr. George Paik believes it was Confucianism that most strongly influenced and formed the character of the people and shaped the course of the civilization of Korea. "For the last five hundred years Confucianism has had unlimited sway over the mind and heart of the Korea. What Korea might have been without it, nobody can tell."³ I think that there are similarities between Confucian ethics and the form of Presbyterianism.

1. Confucian Ethics and Presbyterianism

Buddhism came to Korea in 372 A. D. and became the official religion during the period of the Koryu Kingdom. It was decreed in 1036 that if a man had four sons, one of these should be a monk. The Koryu dynasty was the golden age of Buddhism. Monasteries and temples were numerous, usually set on some beautiful, quiet spot in the mountains. During Koryo times, Confucianism was much neglected and

²Homer B. Hulbert, The Passing of Korea. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1969), pp. 403-404.

³Lak-Geon George Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea 1832-1910. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1970), p. 24.

Buddhism became powerful in political affairs. The abuse of this influence by the Buddhists led the Yi dynasty to outlaw Buddhism and to install Confucianism as the official state religion, making the study of the classics of Confucianism the basis for official appointments.⁴

Confucianism, properly speaking, is not a religion but a system of moral teaching and behaviour based on the Five Relations: "Loyalty to the king, faithfulness to friends, conjugal fidelity, and fraternal love are inculcated as the cardinal virtues."⁵ Of the Five Relationships, the one which received the greatest stress in actual practice, is the relation of parent and child (or father and son). Confucius (551-479 B.C.) was a great moral teacher, but was almost an agnostic in spiritual matters. "His general attitude was that one should take care of one's obligations in this world first before getting too much involved in discussions of beliefs regarding heaven and any future life."⁶ He, himself, gave little thought to the problems of God, the soul or immortality.⁷

Filial piety, above all, is emphasized as being the root of all moral principles in Confucian ethics. Ancestor worship is expressed as a religious ceremony and is the result of extending

⁴Allen D. Clark, A History of the Korean Church. (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1971), p. 44-45.

⁵Paik, p. 24.

⁶Clark, p. 44-45

⁷Ibid.

filial piety to the dead. The Christian Church faced and was diametrically opposed to such forms of Confucianism as ancestor worship in the early days of its missions in Korea. Zealous Christian converts tore down their ancestral tablets and set them on fire.⁸ However, there are some similarities between the honor of old men or parents and the system of elders in the Presbyterian form of government. The elders of the Presbyterian Church really corresponded to the numerous Eo Reun (elders) of small towns. They are greatly respected, even today, in Korean communities. When the elders of towns were converted and became Christians, they became elders in a local Presbyterian church. Evangelism was much easier and was accelerated through their influence as leaders. It can be held, therefore, that Confucian filial piety and honoring the aged have contributed greatly to the growth of the Korean Presbyterian Church among many other Protestant denominations.

2. The Fast Growing Korean Presbyterian Church

I have already mentioned some factors which promoted growth of the Korean Presbyterian Church. The Nevius Method and Confucianism are among these factors. The democratic form of government of the Presbyterian Church seems to have been appealing to the people under the Japanese occupation. They had no other kind of self-government. This means that the Korean Presbyterians enjoyed a representative

⁸Paik, p. 33.

democratic government in their Church operations long before Korea gained her Independence. The Church gave the people a sense of independence in their church life during the period of the oppression and exploitation by the Japanese colonialism. The other Protestant Churches also contributed to the sense of freedom of the people as far as their church life was concerned, but it was really the Presbyterian representative form of government with its sessions and session members (elders) that impressed the Korean people with self-government and self-support.

The elders' system of the Presbyterian Church satisfied the need for filial piety among the Korean people and also quenched the thirst for freedom and independence of the people generally. It was easy for Presbyterians to build church leadership around their sessions and elders, who were already highly respected in rural and urban communities in Korea. All these factors, and probably some others, too, have made the Korean Presbyterian Church grow fast in Korean soil.

The Korean Presbyterian Church has been splitting into small branches since 1951. There are now forty-three small and large denominations under the name of the Korean Presbyterian Church.⁹ It is said that unless you use a Presbyterian name the people would be hesitant to come to your church. The Korean Presbyterian Church, the Korean Methodist Church, and the Korean Evangelical Church have been the largest and most important Protestant Denominations in Korea. The

⁹Yong Bok Jun, p. 180.

Methodist and Evangelical Churches originated from the episcopal system of church government. However, now they have the board of elders as the governing body in the operation of their local churches. It is surely from the Korean Presbyterian Church that they have adopted the session form (board of elders) to the structure of their local churches. Churches in the two main denominations and also those in smaller denominations are basing their operations on the Presbyterian system, which means a session (board of elders) in each local congregation. The Korean Evangelical and Presbyterian Churches have exactly the same regulations with regard to the session. The ratio of elders to members is one to thirty, the term of elders is permanent, the confirmation of elders is approved by two-thirds of the votes at the congregational meeting.¹⁰ In the United States, local Korean churches of the Assembly of God are allowed, by the General Assembly, to have a system of sessions.¹¹ I believe the Korean Evangelical Church has a system of elders in the operation of local churches. It is an exaggeration to say that most of the Protestant Churches have been somewhat influenced by the system of government of the Korean Presbyterian Church as far as the operation of the session is concerned.

There are more than four hundred Korean churches in Southern California. The Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Baptists, and the Pentacostals (Full Gospel) are the big denominations in Korean immigrant

¹⁰Telephone Conversation Interview, Dr. Jang Kyun Park, the stated clerk of the General Assembly of the Evangelical Church in the United States, February 12, 1983.

¹¹Telephone Conversation Interview, Rev. Sun Jung Park, President, Korean Full Gospel Seminary affiliated with the Assembly of God, Whittier, California, February 12, 1983

communities. The Presbyterian Church has been divided into two branches: one is called the Korean Presbyterian Church (Tong Hap, Pro-ecumenism), the other, the Korean Presbyterian Church (Hap Dong, Anti-ecumenism). It is said that there are two groups in the Methodist Church: one group is affiliated with the United Methodist Church in the U.S.A., the other group is not.¹² The Baptists have many groups, too. In my observation, most of the above-mentioned Korean churches have session-systems in their polity except those affiliated with the United Methodist Church or with the Southern Baptist Conference. All of these other denominations experience the same problems the Presbyterians have had to face in their church government with regard to the structure and operation of the session. If we study carefully the structure and operation of a session, we can find problems with it and can improve and solve them gradually in the near future.

B. COMPARISON OF SESSIONS IN THE KOREAN IMMIGRANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES AND UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.

The session of a Presbyterian Church is the supreme governing body of that congregation which consists of the pastor (or co-pastor) and the ruling elders in active service.¹³ This body is the basic and important court among the Presbyterian judicatories. In general the

¹²Telephone Conversation Interview, Dr. Chang Soon Lee, Pastor, Wilshire United Methodist Korean Church, Los Angeles, California, February 12, 1983.

¹³Eugene Carson Blake, Presbyterian Law for the Local Church. (New York: United Presbyterian Church in U.S.A., 1982), pp. 46-47.

session is responsible for the whole life in a particular Presbyterian church. The general character of the powers and responsibilities of the session is found in the Constitution as follows:

The session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the congregation, for which purpose it has power to inquire into the knowledge and Christian conduct of the members of the church; to call before it offenders and witnesses, being members of its own congregation, and to introduce other witnesses, where it may be necessary to bring the process to issue, and when they can be procured to attend; to counsel parents that they have the responsibility of either presenting their children for baptism as infants or nurturing the children toward baptism upon their public profession of faith; to decide who shall be baptized, instructing the congregation in the benefits and obligations which baptism involves; to take appropriate action to the end that the person being baptized shall be sustained and instructed in the faith by the whole congregation; to permit baptized children of the church, when their families deem it appropriate, to receive the Lord's Supper with the congregation before such children shall have made formal profession of faith; to decide who shall be members of the church, and to receive them into the community of the church upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ, upon presentation of satisfactory certificates of church membership, or, in the absence of such certificate upon the part of persons coming from other churches, upon reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ, making certain that membership is not refused because of color, origin, or worldly condition;¹⁴

As stated above, the session is in charge of maintaining the spiritual government of the congregation: inquiring into the knowledge of its members, baptizing infants and adults, the administration of the Lord's Supper, membership, supervising the church school and the works of deacons and trustees and all societies and agencies of the congregation. The session has exclusive authority over the worship of the congregation and all of the affairs and activities of the particular church, except

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 46-47.

such matters as may, for Form of Government, be specifically accorded to the pastor, to the congregation, or to a higher judicatory.¹⁵

The Book of Order of the Korean Presbyterian Church says about the authority and responsibility of the session as follows:

1) The session has power to inquire into the faith and conduct of the members of the church, to examine them for probation, baptism and confirmation, and to administer baptism and sacrament. 2) The session shall issue and receive the certificates of church membership. 3) The session administers the worship service, supervising the agencies and societies in the church and promoting the interests of the congregation. 4) The session installs ruling elders, deacons and Kwon-sas.¹⁶ 5) The session takes care of administering offerings and financial matters. 6) The session selects its delegates to the Presbytery, reporting the current circumstances of the church to it and submitting its recommendations to it. 7) The session calls before it offenders and witnesses and sentences them when found guilty.⁸ 8) The session administers the properties of a particular church.¹⁷

We have stated the authorities and responsibilities of both the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Tong Hap). We can not find any big differences among the functions and authorities between the two Presbyterian Churches. Actually, the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Tong Hap) came into existence through the works of the missionaries of the Northern Presbyterian Church (the former name of the United Presbyterian Church) as we already observed in the activities of Presbyterian missionaries in chapter III. Both Churches hold the Reformed faith and Presbyterian form of government according to the Reformed tradition.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 47-48.

¹⁶Kwon-sa, see p. 5.

¹⁷The Book of Order (Korean), (Seoul: Education Dept. of Presbyterian Church in Korea, General Assembly, 1971), p. 157.

It is the structure and operation of the session, not its authority and responsibility, that really affects and influences the Church for Christ and His people. Accordingly, the operation of the session depends greatly upon its members, The Book of Order describes the session:

The session of a particular church consists of the pastor (or co-pastor) and the ruling elders in active service. Each associate pastor and assistant pastor shall be a member ex officio and without vote of the session of the particular church he or she serves.¹⁸

It is important to remember at the outset that a session basically consists of two parts: the ruling elders elected by the active members of a particular church as their representatives and the pastor or pastors installed in that church by the presbytery (but only at the request of the congregation).¹⁹ If we go to the times of Calvin's Genevan Church, two separate companies in a session:

It was turned over to the Consistory, an institution specially created for the maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline. All the city pastors were automatically members of it. It also included the elders of the Genevan church, laymen elected annually to this office, by a procedure which made it certain that several councillors and a synodic would always be members.²⁰

We can notice the well-balanced authority in the above-mentioned Genevan Church at the beginning of Presbyterianism. The spirit and principle of the session is that, apart from the ruling elders, the pastor has very little authority by virtue of office in a Presbyterian Church.

¹⁸The Book of Order. (Office of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1967), XI, 1.

¹⁹Blake, p. 41.

²⁰John H. Leith, Introduction to the Reformed Tradition. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p. 21.

On the contrary, apart from the pastor, the ruling elders have no authority, practically, as a group or as individuals. It is the basic principle of Presbyterian government that authority is lodged in the group of pastor and ruling elders, not in individuals.

It is generally understood in the Korean Presbyterian Church that the elders of the session have real authority while the pastor is on a "temporary" basis. We can discover several reasons for this understanding. Firstly, there is the problem with the term of elders. The Book of Order of Presbyterian Church in Korea states: "There are two kinds of officers in the Church. The one is permanent, the other temporary. The office of an elder is permanent and terminates at the age of seventy."²¹ Once an elder is elected and installed in a particular Presbyterian church in Korea, he is to serve the church for his lifetime (until the age of seventy), but the pastor comes to a particular church, serving it for a certain period of time, and departs. Secondly, as laymen, elders belong to the congregation, while the pastor is not a member of it but belongs to the presbytery. Thirdly, elders support the church in terms of financial matters, while the minister is dependent upon the church. During my ministry to a Korean immigrant church, I have heard this said by one of the session-members. Fourthly, there is a problem with the procedure of inviting a minister to a particular Presbyterian church. It is the Presbytery, not the congregation, that formally invites and installs a minister to the church.

²¹The Book of Order (Korean), pp. 145-146.

Actually, it is the congregation (including elders) that invites the minister to their church. Since elders represent the congregation, authority remains in the hands of the elders of the church.

As I have stated in the introductory chapter, the Presbyterian form of government presupposes church courts. We have many difficulties with the sessions of Korean Immigrant Independent churches in Southern California. There is not higher court, but they still claim to be "Presbyterian" because they hold the Reformed tradition theologically and keep the session as in the Presbyterian form of government. A Korean immigrant Presbyterian church works upon the congregational form of government in the sense that the congregation has the power to call a minister to its church, directly or through its session. On the other hand, the immigrant church can be called "Presbyterian" in the form of government since the members of the church delegate their power to the members of the session, whom they elect as their elders. This is not only the case with Korean immigrant independent churches, but also with Korean Presbyterian churches which are affiliated with Presbyterian higher courts in Southern California.

The Korean Presbyterian concept of eldership is quite different from that of the United Presbyterians in U.S.A. For example, the idea of eldership is shown in the section of "Qualifications of Elder" of the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church in Korea:

An elder should have a considerable amount of knowledge and leadership, seven years of good standing in membership, and should be over thirty years old. He should be a person of faith who is

described in 1 Tim. 3:1-7.²²

It is necessary to notice that the age of an elder is considered one of the decisive qualifications to the office of ruling elder, whereas there is no age factor in the section regarding the office of ruling elder in the Book of Order of U.P.S.U.S.A.:

Those who fill this office ought to be blameless in life and sound in the faith; they should be persons of wisdom and discretion; and in their walk and conversation should be examples to the flock. The office of ruling elder shall be open to and filled by men and women regardless of race, ethnic origin, disability, marital status, or age.²³

The Book of Order states that every congregation gives fair representation of all ages and of all ethnic minorities of that congregation to the office of ruling elder. The United Presbyterians consider fair representation of all ages for the election to the office of ruling elder to be important, while Korean Presbyterians are inclined to regard the age of ruling elders very seriously. This rule and principle shows that the Korean Presbyterian Church is authority-oriented in its system and operation, whereas the United Presbyterian Church is more inclined to the democratic and representative spirit in church government.

Careful comparison between the two Presbyterian Churches in terms of the operations and structures of the session and its members will show us the real causes of the problems with Presbyterian churches in Korean immigrant communities. John Calvin gave more serious

²²Ibid., p. 152.

²³Blake, p. 25.

attention to polity than did any other major reformer.²⁴

1. Concept of Elder in Korean Presbyterian Churches and the United Presbyterian Churches.

As the term "elder" indicates, age is definitely the true origin of the authority of elders in primitive times. The most important qualifications of elders in Korean Presbyterian churches are his age, experience and knowledge. The following are described as qualifications of elders by the author of the book, "A Study of Elders":

An elder should have a considerable amount of knowledge and leadership for he has to administer church government, to discipline its member, and to supervise the spiritual affairs of its members in cooperation with pastor. An elder should have sufficient knowledge and leadership to lead the people..... An elder has to be over thirty years old in order to govern the church as a mature person (Eo Reun)²⁵ and leader.²⁶

This is the general consciousness of Korean Presbyterians concerning the office of elders in their church-life. In general, Korean Presbyterians think of the office of an elder in terms of "status", while the United Presbyterians conceive of an elder in terms of "function". When Korean Presbyterians, for example, regard the minimum requirement of the age of an elder as necessary, they think of many Biblical examples. It was at the age of thirty that the Levites began their work in the Tabernacle. The author of the above-mentioned

²⁴Leith, p. 152.

²⁵Eo Reun, a mature person, sometimes an elder or a chief of a clan or a town.

²⁶Taek Jin Im (ed.), A Study of Elders (Korean). (Seoul: So Mang Sa, 1981), pp. 81-84.

book refers to the fact that Joseph stood before Pharaoh at the age of thirty (Gen.41:46), the king, David, went to the throne at thirty, and our Lord Jesus began his ministry at the age of thirty.²⁷

An elder is compared to priest, governor, and king with regard to age in Korean Presbyterian churches. When someone is ordained as ruling elder in Christian churches in Korea or in Korean communities in this country, even the people outside the Christian community regard him as mature and honorable in terms of personality, credibility, and character in social life. It is true that Korean Presbyterians consider the office of ruling elders as status and, at the same time, they think of it individually. That is why they stress the qualities of the office of elder. The progress and growth of a Presbyterian Church actually depend upon the nature and personalities of the members of the session. The case is different with the United Presbyterians. When they think of eldership, generally, they take the office of elder collectively in connection with the session. "Authority is lodged in ordered groups and not in individuals."²⁸ An elder is to be recognized for his authority and functions in the session. This is the spirit of Presbyterianism underlying the United Presbyterian Church and shown in such requirements of the session as age and term.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Blake, p. 42.

2. The Number of Elders in Session

The Book of Order does not specify the size of the session in a particular Church. Any mention of the number refers to the quorum of the session as follows:

Of this judicatory (session), two ruling elders, ef there be so many, with the pastor, if there be any, shall be necessary to constitute a quorum; unless the ruling elders number nine or more, when one third of the ruling elders, with the pastor, if there be any, shall be necessary to constitute a quorum.²⁹

It is the job of the session or the congregation to decide how many they need in their local church. Each congregation elects elders according to their own by-laws, determining the number of the session-members. However, the Book of Order of the Korean Presbyterian Church stipulates the number of the session-members in proportion to the size of the congregation:

The session of a particular church consists of the pastor, the associate pastor (if any) and the ruling elders in active service. Not less than thirty members in a particular church can constitute a session with two elders. The increase of the session-members shall be done in the ratio of 1:30 (one elder to thirty additional members).³⁰

Some of Korean Presbyterian Churches have lowered this ratio of elders and members to one to twenty-five. But, whether it is twenty-five or thirty, this order should be strictly observed. The presbytery has authority to allow its member-church to increase the number of the session-members. There is an examination committee in the presbytery.

²⁹The Book of Order, XI, 2.

³⁰The Book of Order (Korean), p. 156.

In order to be a ruling elder, the candidate has to pass the examination by that board, even after he has been elected by his congregation. This fact shows that Korean Presbyterians consider an elder to be an individual leader, rather than merely a representative of his congregation in church government. It is the general understanding of Korean Presbyterians that the authority and power of the session derive from the personal character or piety of individual members. They do not think that the real authority of a session comes from the power delegated by the Lord for His work. Accordingly it is a natural inference by Korean people that a small number of session-members will be more authoritative in a local church.

This image of an elder has caused many problems and difficulties for Presbyterians in Korea in general and also to Korean immigrant churches, particularly in Southern California. For example, Korean Hope Presbyterian Church is one of the Presbyterian immigrant independent churches, located at 903 Crenshaw Blvd., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, which has been serving as pastor for almost twelve years. From 1972 to 1975, this church had a single elder in its session, although there were around sixty members. There might be several reasons for having a single elder. One of the major reasons was that they were not allowed to have more, according to the Presbyterian tradition. The mission and operation of the church were weak because of the small number of elders - one. When the number of session-members is small and the session is weak, the church has to depend

upon the board of deacons.³¹ In the United Presbyterian Church a church can elect as many elders as necessary for its missions. This practice conforms to the Reformed tradition. As we already stated, the Genevan Church had twelve ruling elders in its Consistory, with the company of pastors. The number of the elders was not proportionate to the church membership or to the number of the pastors in the Genevan Church. It is held that Korean Presbyterians adhere to their own tradition, not to the practice of the Reformed tradition.

3. Concept of Elder's Age as Korean Presbyterian Churches and the United Presbyterian Church in U. S. A.

As mentioned before, age is a most important factor for determining eldership with Korean Presbyterian churches, while the United Presbyterian Church does not count on it. Even though the specified age-limitation of an elder in the Korean Presbyterian Churches is thirty, Korean Presbyterians consider the age of thirty to be young. For example, there are five elders in my church. Their ages are 67, 57, 51, 50, and 45, respectively. Their average age is fifty-five. This average is much higher than that of the congregation in my church. Even though the Book of Order of the Korean Presbyterian Church states the minimum age of an elder to be thirty, almost nobody in Korea recognizes the person of thirty years as his

³¹The Korean Presbyterian Church does not have the board of deacons in a strict sense of meaning. The board of deacons is included in the board of officers.

elder. There are five elders in the Anaheim United Presbyterian church, which is affiliated with the United Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. The ages of these elders are 62, 57, 47, 45, and 43. The average age is almost fifty-one.³² It is said that an elder is supposed to be "bearded and gray-haired". Both cases clearly show how important the age factor is in the election of elder in Korean Presbyterian Churches, as well as in the United Presbyterian Church in Korean immigrant communities. "The office of ruling elder shall be open to and filled by men and women regardless of race, ethnic origin, disability, marital status, or age",³³ but this law is hardly applicable in Korean Presbyterian churches. Rev. Song told me of a serious problem with age in regard to the office of ruling elder in his church. He has a very fine young member in his church who was well-educated in an American college. He is bilingual,³⁴ devotional and committed to Christ. His name always comes up and is included in the list of suggested candidates for elder. The nomination committee always rejects his name because he is young. Some of the congregation say, "How can we listen to such a young fellow as he?" And most of the session-members say, "How can we work with such a young man in the session meeting?"³⁵ This may sound strange to some Western or American people,

³²Telephone Conversation Interview, Rev. Joseph Song, Pastor, Anaheim United Presbyterian Church, February 8, 1983.

³³Blake, p. 25.

³⁴"bilingual" is urgently needed in Korean Presbyterian church and Korean communities.

³⁵Telephone Conversation Interview, Rev. Joseph Song. This story was told in the regular session meeting among his elders.

yet this is the general feeling and thought about elders among Korean people. "Elder" does not mean only "an old man", but an elder is understood to be mature and old in Oriental societies, as shown in the primitive times of clans or tribes in the Old Testament and ancient history.

This is one of the problems the Korean immigrant churches have to face and to cope with. Some of the Korean Presbyterian churches have been struggling with this age problem with their sessions, and the situation is improving a little in this area. San Gabriel United Presbyterian church has five elders in its session now. Their ages are 38, 38, 43, 43, and 65. The average of the ages is forty-five. It is noticable that there are two elders thirty-eight years of age in the session of that church. This is a sign of improvement in changing generations in the immigrant churches. If the rotation system of the members of a session is operated harmoniously in each local church, I am convinced that the age-problem will be improved or solved in the minds of Korean Presbyterians.

4. The Term of Session Member

The term of elders in active service is the major difference in session management between the Korean Presbyterian Church and the United Presbyterian Church. The United Presbyterian Church states the term of ruling elder:

No ruling elder shall be elected to the session for a term of more than three years, nor shall a ruling elder serve on the

session for consecutive terms, either full or a partial, aggregating more than six years. A ruling elder having been elected to the session for consecutive terms aggregating six years shall be ineligible to serve thereon for a further term until at least one year has elapsed from the expiration of the last term for which that person was elected.³⁶

Since a ruling elder is eligible to serve one term of three years or a maximum of two terms, he has to step out of the session after three or six years' service.

There is no limitation of the term of ruling elders in Korean Presbyterian Churches. The active membership of ruling elder is permanent in his church unless he resigns from his position. The result is that an elder has great influence over his church. We can see many elders who have served their churches for a life-time: twenty or thirty years. They are so powerful that they are really considered the "boss" in church government.

Terms of ruling elders, and thus their power and authority, are rotated in the United Presbyterian Church often enough that most of the congregation can share in the positions of authority. An elder does not have to be old enough to govern his congregation for a life-time, but he is supposed to serve the church of Christ for a certain period of time. So, the rotation of eldership connotes the democratic form of government in the Presbyterian Church. If the Korean Presbyterian Church adopts this rotation system of ruling elders, it will be able to solve the hard problems the Church

³⁶Blake, p. 25.

confronts today in terms of the church session. However, there is a weak point with this rotation system. Ruling elders do not stay in the church on expiration of their terms. Since Korean people usually think of the office of elder as a permanent position, ruling elders in inactive service are not willing to serve the same church any more, but look for another church in which they can become active elders. This is the serious problem with some of the immigrant churches which have joined the United Presbyterian Church in U. S. A.³⁷

Some years ago my church (Hope Church) was going to modify its by-laws in order to adopt the rotation system of eldership. One of the ruling elders came to me privately and told me that he would go to another church if he was out of the office of ruling elder.³⁸ There was a great movement in Korean Presbyterian immigrant churches for joining the United Presbyterian Church in U. S. A. in 1976. The United Presbyterian Church decided to establish some "Language Presbyteries"³⁹ in the General Assembly for the Korean Presbyterians scattered throughout this country. There were three Korean Presbyteries in this country: Eastern Presbytery (the region of eastern States), Central Presbytery (the region of central States), and Western Presbytery (the region of western States). This plan was

³⁷Telephone Conversation Interview, Rev. Joseph Song.

³⁸This elder is 51 year old, ordained at the age of 38, serving Hope Church since 1976. He told me that he was so healthy that he could not find any reason for leaving his active eldership.

³⁹I was involved in the merging negotiation with the United Presbyterian Church commissioners as representative from Korean Western Presbytery.

not endorsed in each Presbytery because of the rotation system of ruling elders. A group of ruling elders objected to the motion in each Presbytery.

Korean Presbyterians think of the rotation system of elders as changed from the original system of the Reformation. However, the original practice in the times of John Calvin was that of rotation, and the elders of the Genevan Church had to be reelected to the office annually:

It (Consistory) also included the Genevan church, laymen elected annually to this office, by a procedure which made it certain that several councillors and a syndic would always be members.⁴⁰

If we can devise a procedure for taking care of outgoing elders in Korean Presbyterian churches, a rotation system will contribute to the missions and growth of Korean Presbyterian churches in Southern California and the United States.

5. Relation between the Session and the Board of Deacons

The authority and responsibility of session have been described earlier in this chapter. I will describe the duties and rights of the board of deacons here.

Christians are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities.⁴¹ In the United Presbyterian

⁴⁰Robert M. Kingdon, Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement, 1564-72. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 37- .

⁴¹Blake, p. 67.

Church, the Constitution states regarding the board of deacons as follows:

....the Constitution provides that any particular church desiring to do so may have a board of deacons which shall minister to those in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress, in accordance with the Scriptural duties of the office. There may be delegated to the board of deacons, under the direction of the session, certain specifically designed responsibilities relating to the development of the grace of liberality in the members of the church, to the devising of effective methods of collecting the gifts of the people, to the finances and properties of the church, and to its evangelistic, missionary, and educational programs. The board of deacons shall assume such duties, not limited to the foregoing, as may be delegated to it by the session.⁴²

The office of deacons is one of sympathy and service, after the example of the Lord Christ. The duties of deacons are summarized into two main parts: one is to care about the sick and needy people, the other to collect the gifts and offerings of the people.

The Korean Presbyterian Church has the board of officers (Jae Jik Hoe) instead of the board of deacons. Sometimes this board is generally understood as the board of deacons because all deacons are included in the board of officers, and compose the majority of the board. Korean Presbyterians do not have the board of deacons in the strict meaning of the name. While the board of deacons consists of the pastor of the congregation and its deacons in active service in the United Presbyterian Church,⁴³ the board of deacons of the Korean Presbyterian Church consists of the pastor of the congregation, ruling elders, deacons, kwon-sas, preachers, and temporary deacons.⁴⁴

⁴²The Book of Order, X, 5.

⁴³Blake, pp. 67-68.

⁴⁴The Book of Order (Korean), p. 166.

The duties of the board of deacons (or officers, called Jae Jik Hoe) are as follows:

- 1) The board of officers shall take care of the church budget passed by the congregational meeting, 2) the board of officers administers the revenues and expenses according to the budget, 3) the board of officers takes care of special offerings and benevolence, and 4) the board of officers takes care of other necessary and important things.⁴⁵

This is the structure of Korean Presbyterian Church which consists of two main boards in a local congregation. One is the board of ruling elders (session), and the other is the board of deacons or officers (Jae Jik Hoe). If the session can be compared to the Senate, the board of officers is compared to the joint session of the Senate and the House of Representatives in the Korean Presbyterian Church. The church has to depend upon the operation of the board of officers when its session is not strong (in number). This creates tension between the session and the board of officers (or of deacons).

It is the Reformed or Presbyterian principle that any board, agency or organization in a local congregation should be under the control of the session. For example, there are five ruling elders in my church (Hope Church), while the board of officers includes one pastor, three preachers, ten kwon-sas, forty-five temporary deacons, a total of seventy-three people. These seventy-three board-members are divided into nine committees which are operated under the oversight of the session. It is customary that each ruling elder

⁴⁵Ibid.

works as chairperson for one of the committees in the board of officers. This church needs nine elders, at least, in order to supervise each committee of the board of officers so that they may exercise authority over all of the affairs and activities of this church. Korean Presbyterian Law and tradition do not allow us to install more than five elders in proportion to the number of members in our church.

In the United Presbyterian Church there is no tension between the session and the board of deacons. The Korean Presbyterian Church can have many problems with the board of officers when a particular church is small. I hold that this problem can be solved through increasing the number of session-members regardless of the size of the congregation in the Presbyterian immigrant churches.

6. The Election of Session Member

The United Presbyterian Church describes, in detail, the procedure for electing ruling elders and other church officers:

Nominations shall be made by a representative nominating committee of active members of the church, which shall itself include both men and women....Two members of this committee shall be designated by and from the session, one of whom shall be named by the session as chairperson. One member of the committee shall be designated by and from the board of deacons, if there be such a board, and one by and from the board of trustees, if there be such a board. Other members of the committee, in sufficient number to constitute a majority thereof, shall be chosen by the congregation or by such organizations within the church as the congregation may designate. In addition, the pastor shall be a member of this committee ex officio but without vote. The nominating committee shall be chosen annually.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Blake, p. 26.

As mentioned above, the nominating committee consists of two elders, one deacon, and four members of the congregation. The committee searches and nominates the candidates for ruling elder and presents the list of the names to the congregation so that they may approve or disapprove it by majority voting.

The Book of Order of the Korean Presbyterian Church describes the election of ruling elder as follows: "Ruling elders must have two thirds of votes from the congregational meeting." There is no nominating committee mentioned. The general procedure for electing ruling elders is this: the congregation proceeds to vote for their elders after the moderator of the session has explained details of the election such as the number of elders to elect, the times of voting (once or twice) etc. Sometimes the session acts as nominating committee, giving the congregation a list of all eligible members or twice as many as candidates as needed. The church never takes the place of the nominating committee.

Even though there are special election regulations stated in the Book of Order, a specific session may change the procedure from time to time so as to give the congregation a fair opportunity to elect their leaders at the congregational meeting.

C. EFFECTIVE STRUCTURE AND OPERATION OF THE SESSION IN TERMS OF PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Adjusting the Number of Elders in the Session, Regardless of the Size of the Congregation

The very strict Methodist and Baptist Korean Churches do not

have the elder system in their local churches, but most of the immigrant churches in the United States have some sort of session on the local level, whether they are Presbyterian or not. Although the United Presbyterian Korean churches and independent Korean churches may have some freedom to govern the office of elder, the General Assemblies of the Korean Presbyterian Churches may not be allowed to adjust or change the regulations.

Reformed theology, historically, has lived comfortably with a variety of polities. Even Calvin, in his history of ecclesiastical development in the ancient church, accepted a variety of polities as viable forms of the church in his times as follows:

We know that church organization admits, nay requires, according to the varying conditions of the times, various changes.⁴⁷

It is true that the Korean independent Presbyterian churches have been inclined to congregationalism. They have not had higher courts (presbyteries). Still, they are Presbyterian because they have a system of elders as stipulated in the Book of Order of the Korean Presbyterian Church. They claim to be Presbyterian because of having a session as supreme governing body in the local congregations. History shows that the Reformed theology has coexisted with forms of church government other than Presbyterian. As Leith explains:

While Reformed theology has been overwhelmingly associated with presbyterian polity, it has thrived at times with congregational polity and has lived with functional and jurisdictional episcopal systems.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Leith, p. 152.

⁴⁸Ibid.

I think it necessary to inform the Korean Presbyterians or Presbyterian-inclined Christians that they can adhere to Reformed tradition even if they change or modify their form of government. Otherwise, they tend to stick to their old traditional church government. Karl Barth, Reformed theologian, is critical of all existing church orders in this respect:

No Church order is perfect, for none has fallen directly from heaven and none is identical with the basic view of the Christian community. Even the orders of the primitive New Testament community (whatever form they took) were not perfect, nor are those of the Western Papacy, the Eastern Patriarchate, the Synodal Presbyterianism which derives from Calvin's system, Anglican, Methodist, Neo-Lutheran or other forms of Episcopacy, or Congregationalism with its sovereignty of the individual community....There is no reason to look down proudly and distastefully from one to the others. At one time they may all have been living law sought and in a certain exaggeration found in obedience, and, therefore legitimate forms of the body of Jesus Christ. Indeed, they may be this still.⁴⁹

First of all, the Korean Presbyterians are supposed to know that they can live with some modified form of church government as "Presbyterian."⁵⁰

This is one of my propositions: it is absolutely mandatory for a local Presbyterian church to have as many elders as needed in its session for effective operation and function. While the United Presbyterian churches have no limitation of their elders, according to their Constitution, the Korean Presbyterian churches limit the number of elders Constitutionally and traditionally. A large church may have no problem with the number of session members, but a small church may

⁴⁹Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 4/2:718.

⁵⁰"Presbyterian" is identified with "conservative, orthodox, Reformed, Biblical" as understood among Korean Presbyterians.

have hardships if it is bound to a quota of elders.

I have discovered the general practice of the United Presbyterian churches concerning the number of elders.⁵¹ The Belvue United Presbyterian Church has 15 elders and a membership of 275. The Bel Air United Presbyterian has 45 elders for just over 2000 members. The Hollywood United Presbyterian Church has 75 elders for more than 3000 members. Rev. Kenneth Hubler informs me that a Presbyterian church with a membership of 200 to 500 usually has 12 to 15 elders, a church with over 500 members has 18 to 24 elders. They have a necessary and reasonable number of elders in their churches. The Presbyterian Constitution does not restrict the churches in installing elders.

If the Korean church should allow the number of session-members to increase, regardless of the size of the congregation, the churches will have many other problems solved in session structure and operation. Firstly, the average of the ages of elders can be lowered a little in order for young generations to participate in local church government. Since the office of elders has been regarded as authority and power, it is natural that it should be considered a "functional, working office" which will encourage faster growth of the Church of Christ. Secondly, there will be no problems if the Korean Presbyterian churches adopt the rotary system of elders in active service. Attempts have been made to merge the Korean and American Presbyterian Churches. This has caused much argument about

⁵¹Telephone Conversation Interview, Rev. Kenneth Hubler, the stated clerk, The Presbytery of the Pacific, February 14, 1983.

the rotary system of elders. If the office of elder could be explained in its membership to include young and old, even the Korean Presbyterians would not think of it in terms of an "elite" power group. Thirdly, the authority or power of a session could be divided into many committees. For example, the Korean Hope Presbyterian Church has five elders. We have not divided the work of our church into committees because of a shortage of members, but have to work it out with the whole group. Even timewise, it is a disadvantage with a session.

Therefore, it is strongly held that the number of members should be increased as freely as necessary for effective operation.

2. Dividing the Function and Power of the Session into Committees

Without a sufficient number of elders, the session can not take care of many committees. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the session-members and to divide them into as many committees as needed for effective democratic operation. If the authority and power are concentrated in a few influential elders, a small church is likely to depend too much upon each one. In order to prevent that kind of power concentration, many committees of elders should be formed and the work divided so that the work and power may be equally shared by them.

As I indicated before, a Korean Presbyterian church has two important boards. One is the board of elders (session); the other

is the board of officers (sometimes called board of deacons).⁵²

If the board of deacons is divided into many committees so that they function properly, and the board of elders (session) does not have committees; then the authority of the church is so inclined to the group of deacons that the spirit of Presbyterianism may be losing itself gradually in that particular church. This has happened recently in our church (Korean Hope Presbyterian Church). Two of the church elders have been absent for a long time. Most church matters, many of which should not be handled in public or by the board of officers, are being considered by this board. Spiritual matters in a Presbyterian church can not be taken care of by any kind of board or meeting except the session. In order for the session to function effectively, its work and authority must be dispersed among its members. Organizing committees in a session is an effective way of dividing and distributing the work of a church among its members.

3. Utilizing Outgoing Elders

Outgoing elders are those who are leaving their session as active members. It is generally reported that when elders are out of their office, most of them leave the local congregation and search for another congregation in which to serve as active elders. This phenomenon has been happening in the Korean churches which belong to the United Presbyterian Church.⁵³ Similar phenomenon seem to have

⁵²A board of deacons and a board of officers is used here interchangeably. This board includes pastor, elders, deacons, preachers, kwonsas, temporary deacons, literally all church officers, still subject to its session.

⁵³Telephone Conversation Interview, Rev. Joseph Song.

happened in some American churches.⁵⁴

It is recommended that elders out of service should stay in the session as honorary or advisory members with no voting power. I have experienced similar cases in my church. When an elder joins my church, after a certain period of time he is invited to our session-meeting as an associate member with no vote. I have not had any problem with outgoing elders in my church. We do not have the rotary system of session-members, so we have not had such elders. This kind of management can be included in a local church's by-laws or handled through the session. I have been told by my fellow United Presbyterian ministers that the rotation system of elders means losing some elders annually.

Therefore, a particular Korean Presbyterian church should give serious consideration to the problem of outgoing elders so that they will not leave their church when they are out of office and may serve the church continuously with honor and dignity. It is the responsibility and authority of the session to take some measures to keep and utilize the outgoing elders for Christ and his church.

4. Establishing Nomination Committee for Electing Elders

A nomination committee consists of two members of the session, one member of the board of deacons, and four laymen from the

⁵⁴I had a class, "Church Management and Polity" by Dr. Arnott, spring semester, 1973. A minister of the Church of Christ told us about the outgoing president of congregation whose term was one year.

congregation. They select and screen the candidates for elder and submit their names to the congregational meeting, so that the congregation may elect them by majority vote. This is the procedure of electing elders in the United Presbyterian Church. Two-thirds of the votes of the congregation are emphasized only in the Korean Presbyterian churches. Other details of the election of elders are left to the discretion of the session.

The following is a general procedure of the election of elders in a Korean church which has a session as a supreme governing body:

1) the session does not take the place of a nominating committee because it is blameable in that case, 2) the session sometimes gives twice as many candidates as needed to the congregation, 3) the session gives no list of candidates to the congregation, leaving the office open to every member.

The session can take the place of nominating candidates for elders in a local Presbyterian congregation, but if the session becomes deeply involved in the election, the congregation sometimes feels uneasy about the result of the election. In case the second method is introduced for the election, only half of the candidates are elected. The other half may become embarrassed and disappointed. It is worthy of note that this second method is usually used in most Korean churches in Southern California, as well as in Korea. The third method is desirable only in a church with a small congregation. When the congregation is large, it is very hard for any member to get two-thirds of the congregational votes.

It is desirable to form a nomination committee under the oversight of the session and for candidates to get the two-thirds vote in a congregational meeting. For example, there was an election of elders in the Korean Hope Presbyterian Church on January 2, 1983. This was the first time that our church had a nomination committee. It was organized temporarily under the supervision of the session. The committee consisted of one elder, one kwonsa, two deacons, one member of the adult society, one from the womens' mission group, one from the youth group and one from the senior group in our church. A representative was selected from the members of each group. They nominated the exact desired number of candidates for elders, two, and put them before the congregation. The congregation elected them by a two-thirds vote at the meeting.

As indicated in this case study, the nomination system of the United Presbyterian Church can function harmoniously with the Korean Presbyterian churches in Southern California if combined with the requirement of a two-thirds vote for the elction of elders of the Korea Presbyterian Church.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study has dealt with problems with the sessions of Korean immigrant churches. They are not problems with these churches, alone, but also afflict Presbyterian Churches in Korea. This study shows that Presbyterianism has not been a fixed pattern of church life but has been flexible in church life historically. Even when the Korean churches discover some problems within their own structure, it is not a simple process to modify or reorganize them. The Korean Presbyterian traditions and such various political groups as elders' group etc. are so involved in church life that some modified and well revised laws of Presbyterian church government are easily defeated on the floor in the General Assembly. For example, the proposal of woman-elders has been rejected for the last twenty years by the General Assembly of all male members.

However, the Korean immigrant churches have a great deal of freedom and autonomy in their polities. They can, I hope, adopt such modified and improved forms of session management as I have suggested in this study. Many Presbyterian bodies are now being formed by Korean immigrant churches throughout the United States. It is to be expected that they may not adhere to their old traditions of church government, but that they will modify, revise, and reorganize their polities, at least in terms of sessions management when they organize a denominational structure and constitute their Book of Order. Both the structure and the operation of sessions in

the Korean Presbyterian churches have been studied, but the structure is more important. If this is not improved or revised, there will not be much improvement in the operations side or in the effectiveness of sessions in local immigrant churches.

If there can be found any way for a particular local church to adjust or to have freedom to change the number (quota) of session-members to as many elders as needed, such other problems as the term of elders, the age of elders, and many committee activities will eventually be solved. Korean independent immigrant churches are free to move, modify and constitute any by-laws and regulations regarding the polities of their churches, yet they are bound to their traditional laws and regulations. Other major Presbyterian immigrant churches also can take some improved structures suggested by this researcher within the limits of their own Constitution.

It is hoped that this project will contribute to the peace and growth of the Korean immigrant churches in Southern California and of all other Korean churches.

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